

The title is set within a large, ornate rectangular frame. The frame features four classical columns, each decorated with intricate carvings of vases and scrolls. The top and bottom horizontal sections of the frame are also filled with elaborate floral and scrollwork patterns. In the center of the frame, below the title, is a detailed illustration of a fireplace. The fireplace has a tall, decorative metal grate with a central hanging chain and a small fire burning within. The entire design is rendered in a golden-yellow color on a dark red background.

# THE HOUSE DIGNIFIED

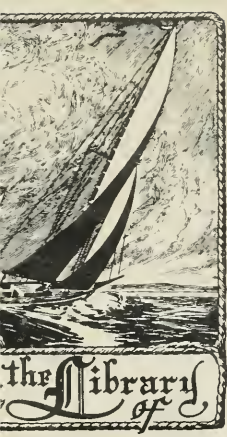
ITS DESIGN  
ITS ARRANGEMENT  
ITS DECORATION

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LILLIE HAMILTON FRENCH



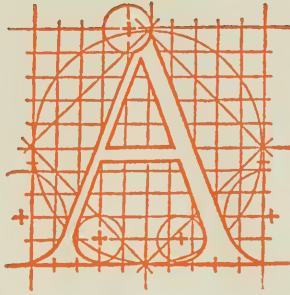
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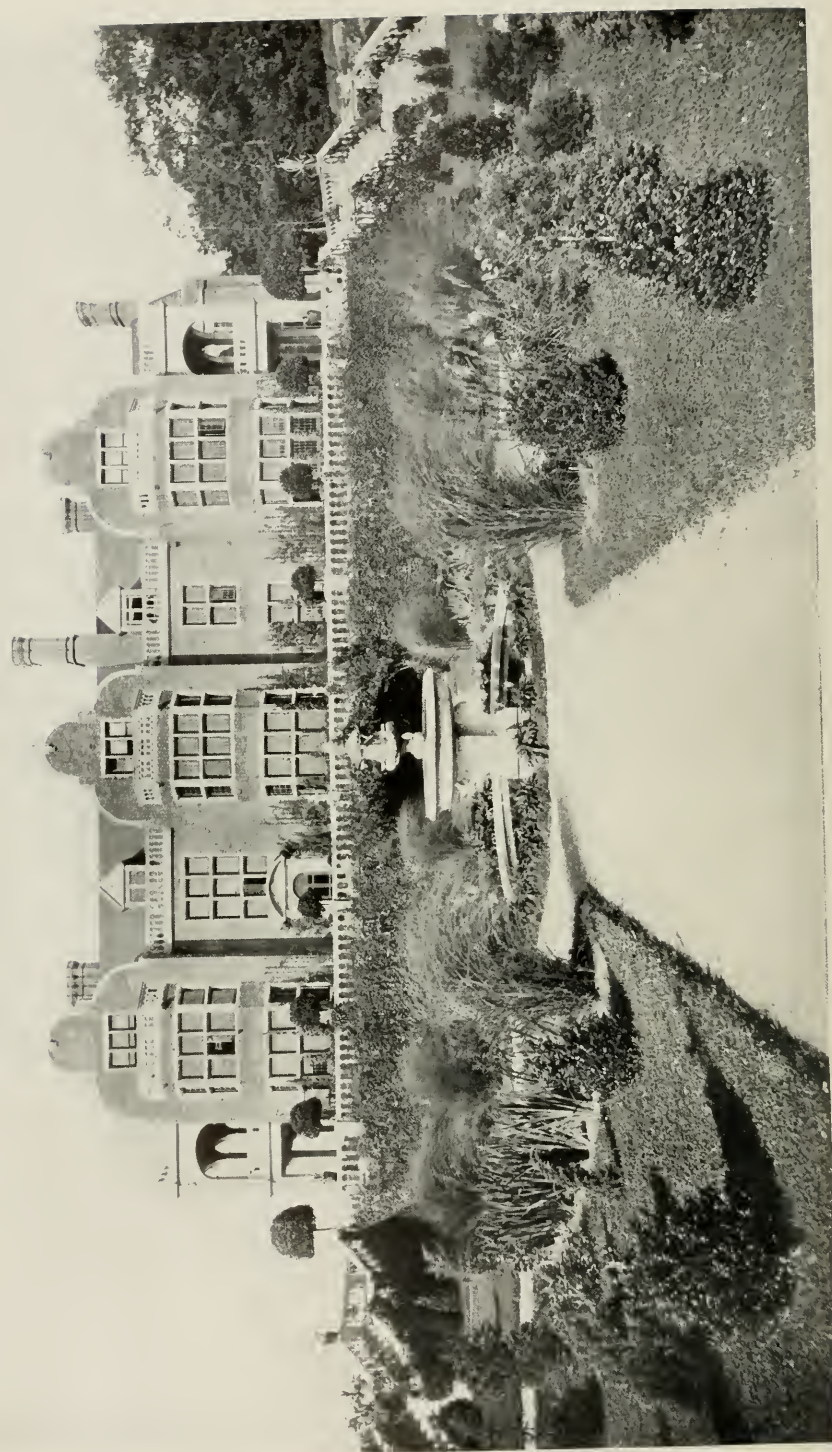












T. Henry Randall, Architect

GARDEN FRONT OF IL W. POOK'S HOUSE AT TUXEDO, NEW YORK



# The House Dignified

Its Design, Its Arrangement  
And Its Decoration

By

Lillie Hamilton French

Author of "Homes and Their Decoration," "Hezekiah's Wives,"  
"My Old Maid's Corner," etc.

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*With Seventy-five Original Illustrations*

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1908



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## Preface

THE need of the present volume has grown out of the fact that, while palatial houses are springing up everywhere throughout our country, the cost and magnificence of which are widely exploited, but little heed has been given to a true consideration either of environments or of the application of detail. Some word, therefore, seems desirable to check those elaborate outlays which not only produce among lovers of the best a feeling of dismay, but establish among the thoughtless standards that are corrupting in their influence.

The word "corrupting" has been used advisedly. There can be no influence so deteriorating in any art, especially in that associated with interior decoration, as the foisting upon a credulous public of gross imitations, and stamping these with names that have always stood for truth and excellence. When these imitations have been guaranteed by that endorsement which a startling price-mark invariably lends, a certain authority, for the moment at least, has been established. The danger is that those with no knowledge of the subject are led to accept as authentic the objects thus



heralded, moulding their own unformed tastes upon them, as when they go about copying certain rooms called after French kings, though fashioned and furnished exclusively by modern upholsterers.

Having no national criterions to guide us, we have been obliged to seek those furnished by older civilisations, as have all peoples, for the matter of that, whose history has been parallel to our own. This, then, is not to our discredit. That which is to our discredit is our tendency to keep following new crazes, trusting to our recently acquired millions to accomplish that which it has taken others centuries to produce. The result has been chaos and confusion, the one dominant note being oftenest one of mere vanity—the vanity of possessions.

To avoid the dangers entailed by a discussion of individual houses, good or bad, the plan adopted in the following pages is that of considering separate rooms, and grouping the descriptions of them in single chapters. In this way it has been thought possible, without offending, to dwell more completely upon that which is most frequently ignored—the question of the adaptation of rooms to special purposes, since it is just here that one encounters the most obvious mistakes. With this plan, too, a greater freedom of discussion is permitted, especially when referring to the almost wanton disregard of fitness, and to the constant missing of right relationships, displayed by those in high places. By following this plan, greater



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latitude is also allowed when referring to what arouses pleasure and enthusiasm, as in cases where every requirement of good taste and beauty has been observed. For back of the lovely impressions produced, lie personalities commanding our respect, men and women who have studied and observed, conscientiously, intelligently, and reverently, subordinating individual whimsicality in matters of detail for the sake of a harmonious total effect—men and women whose sole aim has been perfection.

Many thanks are due from the author of this book to those who have so generously opened their houses to her. If to any of these a comment should come with the shock of a privilege abused, this apology is offered: Nothing has been written here in a censorious spirit. The essentially bad has not been included in any discussion, but the author has ventured to call attention to certain weaknesses and defects which, in her judgment, occasionally accompany high general excellence.

L. H. F.

NEW YORK, September, 1908.







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# THE HOUSE DIGNIFIED

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## Chapter I

### Entrances and Halls

THE interest felt in modern entrances and halls owes its inspiration to something more than a merely ephemeral concern with novel architectural features. A deeper feeling is involved. Consciously or unconsciously, we are striving to solve the problem of their rightful relation to the house as a whole, not only in the way of balance and proportion, but as indicating the deeper notes sounded by individual character, breeding, and a certain *savoir faire*.

Happily, of late years, we have been paying the subject a closer and more intelligent attention. We can hardly pay it too much. For in the psychology of the home, the hall and entrance stand for the hand-clasp of the host, his manner of welcoming or repelling



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you. They reveal his all-round equipment. Before a word has been uttered, you have "sensed" the mental make-up of the man, and have been made to feel the measure of his social tact.

A phenomenal national prosperity has set us to indiscriminate building. Every kind of architectural excrescence has been the result, since most of us have gone about it in an irresponsible, haphazard fashion, governed by no recognised or well-thought-out laws and standards. The history of our so-called development has been characterised, indeed, not so much by progressive steps as by a series, now of revolts, now of servile imitations, and now again by a state of wild pandemonium in which only catchwords, have controlled us—Empire, Queen Anne, Elizabethan or Renaissance—any word, in fact, which fashion having once uttered boastfully, the manufacturer has adopted and turned to his profit—just as he satisfied the demand for oak furniture with the monstrosity now known as the yellow oak of commerce.

When we have not been caught by catchwords, we have, for lack of models of our own, set about copying, not adapting, foreign models, importing many which bore no rightful relation to our particular environment, as when we reproduced houses surrounded by landed estates, and tucked them into corners of well-filled city blocks. Worse still, doggedly determined on some one feature of another man's





T. Henry Randall, Architect

ENTRANCE TO H. W. POOK'S HOUSE AT TUXEDO, NEW YORK







dwelling, which seemed good in that place, and no doubt was, we have insisted upon adopting that particular feature for ourselves, without regard to its fitness. Thus, we have colonial doors appearing in brown-stone fronts, the windows of which have not been brought into harmony. Or we have heavy bronze gates, proportioned for palaces, set up at the head of conventional city stoops, our imagination not having proved equal to the task of considering the rest of the façade.

Thus, too, bent on imitation at all costs, we have been made to suffer, during the last quarter of a century, from a perfect epidemic of halls transformed into living-rooms, an epidemic which has affected even the prosperous town-dweller. Fireplaces have been constructed and upholstered seats set out in the only passage-ways to which strangers and messengers could be admitted, and through which guests arriving for dinner must make their way up-stairs for the removal of wraps and overshoes, elbowing a way past earlier arrivals, now divested of their street apparel. The effect upon no one is agreeable, and the question inevitably arises, Why, with wealth enough to build at all, and with even a pretence of the hospitable spirit, should one be willing to submit one's self or to subject one's guests to the discomfort of these disagreeable encounters? If a roomy gathering-place is so much desired, why not build such a place in a room apart, leaving the hall to express its legitimate purpose



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—that of a passage-way? Its charm would only be quickened by its privacy, its dignity enhanced by closed doors.

Halls to which the general outsider is admitted are permissible only in mountain camps or club-houses. They are an abomination in the town or country house where entertaining goes on, and not all the glory of tapestry and armour, nor all the allurements of blazing hickory, make them admissible. A screen set up, or a curtain hung, may represent a certain attempt at atonement, but the hall misused is the original sin of the builder, which even generations of correct living cannot outgrow.

To sum up, then, a hall is a passage-way to apartments beyond. Without doubt it should be made lovely, but as certainly its cordiality should be tempered, not made embarrassing. It should promise good things, and charm in a passage to them, but not insist upon holding you, like groups of people who stop on Broadway for embraces, blocking the way and obtruding the intimacies. Intimacies are not for the general eye.

In the best of our modern houses, not necessarily those designed by our best architects, but those in which the fine intelligence of the householder has been an informing factor, this question of entrances and halls has been treated with dignity and discretion. And perhaps the only way of arriving at a clearer understanding of the subject will be by referring to





Herter Bros., Architects

ENTRANCE TO WILLIAM D. SLOANE'S RESIDENCE, 2 WEST 52D STREET, NEW  
YORK CITY







what has already been accomplished in some notable instances.

With the very first discussion of plans, then, there was always recognition of the fact that provision for entertaining must be made. Here the question became at once involved with that concerning the number of halls to be thrown open to guests. Only when this point was settled was one left free to discuss details of arrangement. For necessarily, when two halls enter in as factors of the problem, one being on the street level, the other on the drawing-room floor, the treatment of each may vary. While the lower hall must be left to express its formality, the upper hall may be considered in its more intimate relations, as part of a whole which, during the exigencies of elaborate entertaining, can lend itself to social relaxation.

In the more important of our town houses, therefore, when the two halls appear, it has been customary to provide, opening out of the lower hall, dressing-rooms for guests, who, their wraps off, make their way to the salons above. Some of these dressing-rooms are both elaborate and beautiful. They are not only provided with toilet tables and long mirrors, chairs and resting-places, but connected with them are always smaller rooms having hot and cold water. Thus, from the moment of arrival, the guest is taken possession of by his host, no detail of comfort being neglected, and no emergency left unconsidered. All



embarrassment has in this way been spared both the entertainer and the entertained.

These lower entrance halls have been a revelation to most Americans, accustomed for so long to narrow passage-ways, and the too obvious staircase. The happiest examples are those in which marbles enter into the construction. There was a time, not so very far removed, when marble was tabooed in halls. In our unthinking ignorance, we revolted from its flagrant abuses, confusing the substance with its misapplication; for we had seen it only on the floors of brown-stone fronts, and stupidly combined with walnut or mahogany. Such combinations, never proper, are now no longer seen, the marble of the modern hall forming floors and walls alike. Simplicity and dignity have become the dominant notes; beauty of line and proportion the compelling factors.

The impression made upon the new arrival is instantaneous and irresistible. The door closed behind him, he feels at once at home and suddenly refreshed, even before he has made ready to ascend to his hostess. No upholsteries annoy him, neither does a trifle unduly detain him. He hears the splash of cool Italian fountains, and feels the refreshment of perpetually moistened ferns. And here it may be as well to repeat, what I have said in another volume, that the presence of growing plants, even in marble halls, suggests at once a kindly tempered atmosphere. We used to think it necessary to introduce notes of





Francis L. V. Hoppin, Architect

RESIDENCE OF RICHARD T. WILSON, JR., 15 EAST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY







crimson to convey a sense of warmth. But that which is suggested by trickling fountains and growing plants assures you a comfort to which even colour is unequal. One may enter such a place from a snow-storm or a dusty, torrid street. The effect is the same. One feels one's self in a region set apart from turmoil and strife, lured on to pleasures above, as by the smile of a child from the window.

Into halls like these the wrought-iron or bronze door opens, protected in many instances by glass doors, having a narrow well-designed framework of metal or wood, depending upon the rest of the construction. Marble benches and tables alone appear in these halls.

Grave mistakes in construction have, however, been made. The street door, when badly placed, will sometimes send a blast of air rushing up the stairs, setting the palms in the upper hall to violent rustling and the backs of the guests to creeping with cold, as if a sudden storm had blown in from the sea. The effect of the gusts of wind among the palms is disagreeably suggestive, even if the weather be warm. To avoid a like impression some house-builders have protected by a sliding glass door the hall in which guests are gathered when entertaining goes on. Thus, in one instance, entrance to the house is had through a marble vestibule opening into a square hall. From this small hall, the guests may during the daytime enter the great hall, or on gala nights ascend by ele-



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vators to the dressing-rooms above, making their descent to their hostess down the grand staircase. The sliding glass door just referred to is at right angles to the small hall. When closed, as for evening entertainments, and banked with flowering shrubs or palms, it not only shuts off the draught, but transforms the great hall into a sumptuous and secluded interior, where a hostess may receive, or her guests may move freely about.

It is a palatial hall of marble with a heavy gold ceiling. The balustrade runs up the wide staircase, and skirts the hall above, the two being lighted by a beautifully coloured dome. From this second upper hall open the library, den, breakfast-room and bedrooms. Over the balustrade are hung rugs and rich embroidered velvets.

In both halls great dignity is preserved. The walls of the lower hall are finished by a sculptured frieze, under which are hung old cathedral stuffs. The big cathedral chairs arranged against the wall proclaim an appropriate formality. The undraped tables are left unencumbered. Stable objects alone are placed upon them, rare but large bronzes and carvings, adding a sense of repose and proportion. The walls of the upper hall are lined with tapestries, while over the doors are charmingly designed oval frames in high relief, enclosing some enchanting Tiepolos.

In houses of lesser note the same general construction has been followed in the lower hall—that





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

RESIDENCE OF CLARENCE MACKAY AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

Charles C.







is, there are dressing-rooms on the street level with stairs leading to the salons above. Charming as are some of these halls, and full of dignity, they necessarily lack the more alluring quality of halls built of marble and set out with trickling fountains. Where walls must be covered with paper and the floor and staircase carpeted, one runs the risk of a bad colour sense in the householder. Then, too, it necessarily follows that no paper or paint can equal in impressiveness the beauty of carved woods or chiselled marbles. Moreover, with bare walls to cover, the temptation to the housekeeper is to introduce too many stuffs and extraneous belongings, till the hall becomes like an overdressed woman, jarring on the senses.

While certain hangings are appropriate for town houses, in the entrance halls of country houses, supposedly left open for every breeze, they are an affliction. Nothing is gained by them, and everything is lost. The loveliest country hall I know boasts but a single hanging. The walls are panelled in old English oak, perfect in their proportion and repose. The floor is of wood, the ceiling carved. The doors are rich in carving and the windows leaded, the green of outside growing things gleaming through. A strip of plain green filling runs the length of the hall, in which are set old oak chests and high-back chairs, the crimson note furnished by some of the coverings adding an irresistible touch of cheer. The tact of the householder is proved by the self-restraint everywhere



exercised and the introduction only of that which delights like a flower, but does not distract like a stuff.

Lower halls, then, having been treated with a due formality, one is left free to introduce the more familiar note in the upper hall, excluded by every law from the approach of the messenger. Fireplaces become possible here, and the familiar sofa, though never to my mind the reading-lamp. All provision for the interchange of civilities should still take on a casual character. But this, as has been said before, is a point sometimes difficult to urge upon the American. We seem to have an instinctive national fear of privacy, a doubtful questioning about closed doors. Fences, too, we abhor, and a protecting iron gate to our gardens sets a whole community aflame.

Some think, for instance, that they have done well by their guests in setting apart for their exclusive benefit corners of an upper hall, being afraid, perhaps, to supply interiors protected by doors, or diffident about doing so. With all our wealth we have not yet attained to the surety and magnificence of certain European methods, where money is not so new, and ways of doing things have been long enough established to arouse no temerity. In some foreign houses, for instance, besides the conventional suite of variously assorted bedrooms and baths, a separate salon is provided for each lady of the party, a liveried footman, appointed for her exclusive benefit, taking up his daily station before her closed door.





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

DRESSING-KOON IN THE FORMER RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY







When, in certain of our town houses, ascent is made to the upper hall leading to the drawing-rooms, a region of beauty and sumptuousness is discovered which goes to prove how surely both the knowledge and taste of certain of the elect among us have progressed. The flight of steps which has ushered us from a region of tempered formality introduces us into one of warm magnificence. The doorways are framed by tapestries or embossed velvets, the velvets of the curtains themselves having borrowed from antiquity a lustre delicate and entrancing as that of moonlight on dew. The fireplaces are of majestic proportions, for the most part being those bought from denuded palaces. The rugs are rare, and often represent the price of a potentate's ransom, the furs a journey to the North Pole to procure. The marbles are exquisitely carved, the hanging lamps embossed with rich designs, the chairs suggesting not only royal occupants, but being themselves creations of master craftsmen.

Yet even here, where the wealth of magnificent appointments abounds, the individuality of the householder sounds the last compelling note. She may make or mar it all by the introduction of the inappropriate, or that lack of self-restraint which impels her to use some material, however rich, with thoughtless disregard of the surroundings, as when brocades or cloths of gold are tossed over tables which, by reason of their very construction, should be left bare, except perhaps of a mat. One recognises insensibly,



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too, where not only knowledge but love has entered in—love of the beautiful for its own sake, and because beauty is a contribution to life. You feel that tender, almost reverential, hands have placed certain objects in certain places, not that they may “fill up” an empty space, but because the empty space has been provided to hold something treasured above all else.

Whatever the number of halls in a house, a harmony of design and treatment—of quality, perhaps, as the better word—should prevail throughout. This is not always insisted upon, the consequence being that those who ascend still another pair of stairs often experience many a rude awakening. The conviction grows that the money perhaps may have given out before the third story was reached; or that the imagination of the householder, exhausted with the tax made upon it by the enforced splendours of the lower halls, had failed her when left by herself, like a half-educated person with no tradition to fall back upon. Real equipment is proved by the treatment of places more or less hidden from the general eye: the test of excellence by the application of detail throughout. And it is just because these truths have been respected that it becomes a delight to walk through the halls alone of certain of our finer houses. There is one, for instance, where on the bedroom floor of a town dwelling, an exquisite all-satisfying hall is discovered of dark carved oak, its panels filled with a rare crimson damask. In another, as beautiful, the hall on the





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LOWER HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







bedroom floor is of old carved oak throughout, lighted by leaded window-panes, and set out with formal chairs and carved oak chests and bare tables. The plain surfaces of the beautiful panels refresh and delight you, the subdued colour of the old oak soothing the senses. In still another bedroom hall, protected by its balustrades, over which one can look down on the stairs (not the halls) below, pictures are hung, French *armoires* are set out, and a sofa placed for a word by the way. In this hall, too, is an antique velvet trunk holding laces, a perfectly legitimate object in such an environment, but a note that would be absolutely false in a drawing-room, where the inconsequential collector, liking to have his possessions in view, has sometimes been tempted to place one of its kind.

In some of the smaller city houses of ordinary dimensions, several interesting departures have been made in the treatment of conventional hallways. These, being necessarily dark, except as they are lighted from the street door, have been covered with white wood-work running up to the roof.

In one interesting example, the wall surface has been broken by a series of charmingly designed arches panelled to produce a receding effect, into some of which mirrors have been fitted. These, besides adding light and cheerfulness, suggest greater space, while the whole architectural arrangement has been cleverly made to conceal the flight of stairs to the basement.



In still another instance, a narrow conventional hall, where the foot of its staircase faces the front door, originally done in a sombre walnut and wall-paper so dark that the gas had to be perpetually lighted, has lately been finished throughout in white. The wooden wall surfaces are broken by panels of delicate proportions. To give a feeling of breadth, a large mirror has been placed to the left of the entrance; under this stands a marble console, the marble repeating that of the floor and the lower step. Opposite to it, and reflected in it, is a panelled mirror made to look like a door, the over-door being a mirror to give light. At the end of the long, straight hall, and facing the entrance, is the servant's door into the dining-room. This again has been treated with panelled mirrors, the over-door being a mirror framed in by delicately turned mouldings. The ceilings are white. The whole effect is one of cleanliness and light.

In the entrances to the more beautiful of our town houses, not only the skill of the architect but the sentiments of the householder have been exercised in new ways. Where space allows they have been made approaches, not sudden stumblings into doorways. The high stoop, so long the horror of New York streets, has been made to disappear. When a flight of steps appears they are not made extraneous, but part of the gradual approach leading up to the doorway. On many of our side streets one comes across beautiful entrances, charming doorways made





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

HALL IN CLARENCE MA'KAY'S HOUSE AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK







an integral part of the façade as a whole, suggesting the dignity and reserve proper to towns, but compelling you to exclamations of admiration by their beauty and proportion. Simplicity is their prevailing note, but a simplicity which does not preclude the use of the costly.

Where taste has been less certain, one sees entrances which shock and bewilder the beholder, just as discordant noises grate upon his ear. Sometimes on the street level one sees a cottage porch reproduced in stone, and becoming by its transformation an ugly and inappropriate adjunct to the house.

Again we see cornices, heavy enough for feudal castles, put over doors too slender to support them; or windows made gloomy and scowling by overhanging brows of sculptured stone, which might have been appropriate in fierce mediæval days, but which are as ridiculous now as a bombastic manner in a drawing-room.

One sees, indeed, many things which go to prove that, surely as we are progressing in certain directions, we are yet for the most part making our way in awkward fashion, as star-fish walk, now jerking to one side, now to another. We need to keep our vision more direct, to understand better, not only our individual and national requirements, but our obligation to the community, more especially to our neighbour—a point too often and too selfishly ignored, as when one makes a façade for the sake of display, and leaves the



rear of the house ugly—indifferent to the fact of its spoiling the outlook of a neighbour's near-by windows.

Profuse and too obvious ornamentation about the entrances of city houses is bad. Now and then some one attempts it with disastrous results, as when huge carved lions are placed outside of doorways. On the other hand, carved lions, or any other heraldic designs, when rightly proportioned, are altogether lovely on those country estates whose architecture calls for them. They impose upon you a feeling of rest and security not easily described.

Unhappily it is only in places where space is not so valuable as in New York that approaches to a house can be given their full and rightful value. Then the very landscape itself, the laying out of trees and gardens, the possibility of vista, are all made to contribute to the general effect—that of leading up to a portal. Sometimes the effect is one of great impressiveness. Sometimes it is one of pure charm, as when the beauty of detail has been combined with a feeling of restraint which suggests the modest drawing-inward of the hostess who, while greeting you with distinction and courtesy, leads you on to better things beyond.





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

UPPER HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







## Chapter II

### Stairways

A FLIGHT of steps tells the story of a house. It gives you a man's love of splendour and magnificence, proves his aspirations toward the beautiful, and reveals his secret care and private hope. It is like an open book, lying outspread before you, in which you may read of royal pageants, trysts of lovers, or the charms of sunny, terraced gardens. It convinces you of past glories, as no fireplace or portal could do. You realise this in feudal castles, where wide flights are found leading to underground galleries once assigned to armed retainers. No single file of soldiers mounted these, but phalanx after phalanx of stern warriors in clattering steel. What else, indeed, could give you as clearly the very sign and seal of a power long since fled, and half-forgotten?

Except the steps before the Capitol at Washington, our own country has in the way of stairs no great evidences of past glories. In our private houses, we have had, to be sure, the wooden stairways of Colonial days, delightful and graceful affairs with their delicate



spindle rails and mahogany hand-rests, suggesting both dignity and a certain lovely elegance. You can still hear on them the click of the high-heeled slippers, and feel again the full round of the arm and the taper of delicate fingers extended to the railing. You can imagine, too, the ascent and descent of the black silk stockings and buckled shoes of imported cavaliers. But these are not the splendours of our modern tiaras and bejewelled stomachers. The needs of to-day differ as noontide and twilight.

In constructing our grand staircases, therefore, especially those in marble, with which of late years our more important houses have been enriched, we have been forced to resort to foreign models as examples. Everywhere the European tradition is recognised. You see it now where a curve or a railing has been borrowed from Fontainebleau, now where a lantern is hung as at the Petit Trianon, and now again in the carvings of an oaken flight. You feel it especially in the application of detail, more particularly in that of the balustrade. The influence here is all foreign, whether it is shown in cut stone and marble, wrought iron, or carved wood. And a very delightful influence it is, adding great elements of refinement and beauty to our houses, and making the process of house-building one perpetual source of pleasure or pain,—pleasure where a fine bit of detail is discovered on some model capable of being applied to a work of to-day; and pain where one is forced to confess in despair that most of





LOWER HALL IN THE FORMER RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY

M. Kim, Mead & White, Architects







its alluring quality has been lost in the process of attempting its reproduction.

The fault is not altogether ours, since the arts involved in the creation of the models were never our possession. Take for example the fine cutting of stone and marble, and compare some of our modern attempts, with their broad lines and heavy detail, with that found in the Moorish work of the Alhambra. There in the Court of Lions the carved marble hangs over the open arches with the lightness and transparency of lace. One feels that a breath might sway it. Such grace is not possible among us. The inspiration has gone. In saying this, no critical carping spirit is implied. The fault, if there be one, lies in the fact that we are not only in too much of a hurry about things to finish them properly, but that we expend our energies on copying, not on originating. "Can't you feel," a woman said to me, pointing to some Gothic carvings in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris,— "can't you feel that these men studied nature? None of these were copyists. That is why they excite our enthusiasm, why we feel their power even in the fragments that have come down to us."

One of the most successful designers of silk that this country ever produced was a woman who got her inspiration from the woods—from the long trail of a delicate vine; the outspread of leaves as they grew close to the ground; the sway of water plants, the cheeks of their blossoms resting on the water; the



## The House Dignified

intertwine of shadow and light, where sprays of leaves grow up against a garden wall. For the most part, though, I repeat, we are in too much of a hurry to do even this; so much of a hurry, indeed, that even when one attempts to build slowly and surely, a host of the inexperienced cry out, wondering why it takes so long to finish a house! Houses finished in paint and plaster can be done quickly, leaving the householder the distraction of choosing her papers and hangings; but houses finished in fine detail, with every question of carving and cornice considered, require patient study and workmanship, and a long time to perfect.

"How did you attain these results?" I once asked a woman who had taken years to build a house, now quoted as the best example of its kind.

"By hard work," she answered; "by study; by being willing to build up and tear down till the proper relations were established; by being willing to sacrifice a cornice or a moulding, beautiful in itself, but out of proportion when placed. Hard work, patience, and pain are the only secrets I know"—a confession which almost any great genius will make, whether the thing created be a book, a picture, or a play. But how many people are capable of making it?

When the fortunate collector has been able to bring back from Europe some exquisite bits of old carving in wood or stone, pieces of an ancient balustrade or frieze, a stained column or fountain, and when, by the skill of the architect, these have been introduced in





T. Henry Randall, Architect

STAIRWAY IN MR. H. W. POOR'S COUNTRY HOUSE AT TUXEDO, NEW YORK







and about stairways, you at once have something compelling you to pause. For here you have that which no machinery has produced; no drill that was driven by steam, but an intelligence that loitered with caressing touch, a fancy that played over every stroke. The houses in which these are found are the houses that stand apart in the memory, and to which one wishes again and again to return.

The most effective of stairways are those which serve to bring the guests down, not up, to the hostess. No more becoming settings could be arranged. For such a stairway, filled with descending figures brightened by the gleam of jewels and sweeping behind them trains of shining satins or rich velvets, makes a picture not easily forgotten. No lovely woman is ever as lovely as at that time; no man, if he be distinguished at all, is so impressive.

The most beautiful example I know is here in New York and is an exact copy of that in the Grand Trianon at Versailles. The side walls are panelled in old Sicilian marbles, carved in high relief. At the head of the stairs one catches a glimpse of the superb tapestries of the upper hall. Over a turn in the stairs is suspended a silver cathedral lamp of great beauty and excellent in its proportions. Further light comes from the dome above, lighted by electricity at night. The stairs themselves are uncovered. There is to my knowledge, no other in this country like it, certainly none where the impression produced is so inspiring and profound.



## The House Dignified

With all our magnificence, however, we have not yet attained to that of the foreign staircases found in certain palaces, where the panels at the upper landing are framed by groups of sculptured life-size figures, the work of the best artists of their day. Perhaps we need the royal interest and patronage, perhaps we have more conscience than to drain the family coffers at all costs. For whatever reason, we see only fragments employed here and there, our general habit for the side walls of our staircases being to use tapestries and portraits,—portraits of importance, it must be said, the size being necessarily considered. Spotty little pictures arranged along the side walls of steps and necessitating frequent pauses for minute examination are necessarily out of the question—or should be.

The lighting of stairways by means of great cathedral lamps suspended from the ceiling adds an imposing touch. The size of the lamp and the massiveness of the great retaining chain necessarily suggest height to the ceiling, and strength to the whole arrangement. Such a lamp, too, serves to break up the feeling of straight lines, carrying the eye off in new and agreeable directions.

The upright Venetian lanterns placed at the foot of the steps, as one sees them in the Scuola di San Rocco, lend both interest and dignity to the stairs. These upright lanterns, by the way, seem sometimes to have proved mere stumbling-blocks to their fortu-





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

STAIRWAY FROM LOWER HALL OF MR. H. W. POOR'S HOUSE, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







nate possessors. One runs across them in some drawing-rooms, set up in inappropriate corners and for no other purpose apparently but that of accentuating the sum of a man's lucky purchases. They are ridiculous when misplaced, as are all other things interesting in themselves, the penalty being that the man who arranges his possessions badly does not even make a museum of his house, but a bric-a-brac shop, where repose is impossible. The impression of a lot of studio properties having been tossed carelessly together is produced by many sumptuous interiors, the cost of whose individual elements has led to their finding their way into print.

The placing of the stairway is of course a question of considerable moment. In this, as in all things else relating to the home, the householder reveals himself. He must prove by his staircase that he knows how to balance his social and domestic life, paying no such attention to one set of interests as will sacrifice his obligations to another. It is not enough to have copied some superb palatial stairway to be made conspicuous, and then to have neglected the others, making the servants' stairways uncomfortable, or those to a third floor uninviting. A proper respect must be shown for the rightful values in all their component parts. Even a knowledge of periods proved by the purchase of furniture, or the proper turn of a moulding, does not entitle the taste of a householder to receive the crowning stamp of excellence. You



must look for such evidences in the general arrangement of the house, the consideration paid to everybody's comfort, the respect observed for everybody's rights. With these, of course, must be allied the satisfaction of the eye.

I know one most lovely stairway which in its refinement and the tact displayed in its position stands for all that is best in the mind of the builder. It leads to a bedroom floor. On all the other stories, even on those of the kitchen and pantry floors, marble has been used in stairway and wall. Out from the upper marble hall, with its tapestries and dome, open the hall and stairway to which I refer. This is entirely of old black oak carved in high relief, on doors and walls. The transition from marble to wood has, however, been made agreeable, the marble door-frame being wide and deep enough to suggest, not a mere opening for the holding of a door, but a sort of preparation for the mind as it were, a leading to something on the other side, as a passage-way would have prepared it. From the carved oak hall, then, rises the oak stairway with its uncarpeted steps. The railing and post are elaborately carved. Above the wainscot the side walls to the ceiling are in oak, their oblong panels, on the level above, filled with paintings. The walls running by the bedroom doors are covered with a deep rich red damask, the transition being made by a series of arches and columns in oak, the arches of the various openings being capped by the same





STAIRWAY IN THE PALACE OF FONTAINEBLEAU. STYLE OF LOUIS XV.



McKim, Mead & White, Architects

STAIRWAY IN MR. CLARENCE MACKAY'S HOUSE AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND, N. Y.







ornamental shell which appears over the various openings below.

The charm of this stairway is one that never palls. You may come upon it again and again, yet it is always with a sense of refreshment and delight, as when you find a flower in unexpected places. And it is in these unexpected discoveries in houses that one is made to feel how certain and how unfailing has been the true appreciation of the householder. To realise, however, how rare such discoveries are, one has only to remember other stairways more or less hidden from the general eye, and upon which one, after having been dazzled with the glories of a drawing-room floor, stumbles with a certain pained surprise.

It is to be set down to our credit that, even in ordinary city houses, we have outgrown our desire for too obvious stairways. Attempts are everywhere being made to lend them some degree at least of privacy, especially in houses unprovided with a separate staircase for servants.

The most common of these methods is that of turning the steps midway in their flight, bringing the bottom step opposite the door leading into the dining-room or pantry. This accomplishes several purposes. The flight from the kitchen then connects with the main staircase, the servants not being obliged to pass by the front door in order to ascend to their bedrooms at night. When the street door is opened, moreover, one is not confronted by



ugly steps, but by a more or less decorative balcony, placed at the turning of the stairs, under which coat closets may be arranged, or pier glasses and seats, for the reception of wraps belonging to visitors disinclined to mount to the story above.

When the steps have not been turned, still other departures have been made to add an element of distinction. In the smaller hall, with its white wooden panels and mirrored doors, described in the preceding chapter, great dignity has been added by a wrought-iron balustrade of charming design. The hand-rail is covered with a deep red velvet, the stair-covering matching it in colour. Though the wooden steps have been retained, a pinkish marble, matching that of the console under the mirror, has been introduced in the lowest step, supporting the newel post, a delicate touch, giving the whole arrangement the impression of having been well thought out and considered. This hall is lighted by a Louis Sixteenth lustre, or chandelier, holding places for eight candles. Balloon-shaped, with delightfully balanced projectors, this lustre is made of beautifully wrought iron and steel, the shining surfaces of the steel being repeated in the rock-crystal pendants of elongated egg shape. To the general effect, then, of cleanliness and light produced by the white wood-work and mirrors, notes of real distinction have been added, clear-cut and exact, which at once lift the whole stairway and hall out of the ordinary.





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

STAIRWAY IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE W. C. WHITNEY, NEW YORK CITY







A still more beautiful stairway is found in a city house of ordinary dimensions—that is, with a twenty-four-foot front. This is in the hall of Caen stone, to which reference has also been made in the preceding chapter as having its wall surfaces broken by arches into which mirrors have been fitted. Here the stairway, which does not face the front door, but is to the right of the entrance, has been made to follow lines of enchanting grace, aërial and light as the flight of a swallow, charming the eye and alluring the fancy. The steps are bare. No colour is introduced anywhere except in the black of the iron balustrade. Yet the effect of coldness is not conveyed, the dignity being like that of the nude in sculpture, removed by its very essence from the reproach of the conventions. The frank austerity of the unrelieved white, lightened only by its mirrors, gains a quality which lends to a more or less contracted area a sense of spaciousness and authority.

What I always carry away from this house is the impression of the beauty made by the line of the stairs; and this leads me to say how much I have always felt indebted to the man (I wish I knew his name) who first introduced the curve into a flight of steps—that curve which carries the top landing out of view of the lower step. Straight flights are for pageants, or for purposes of pure utility. But the curve, or bend, is for all that is graceful and lovely and amenable in private life. It beckons you like

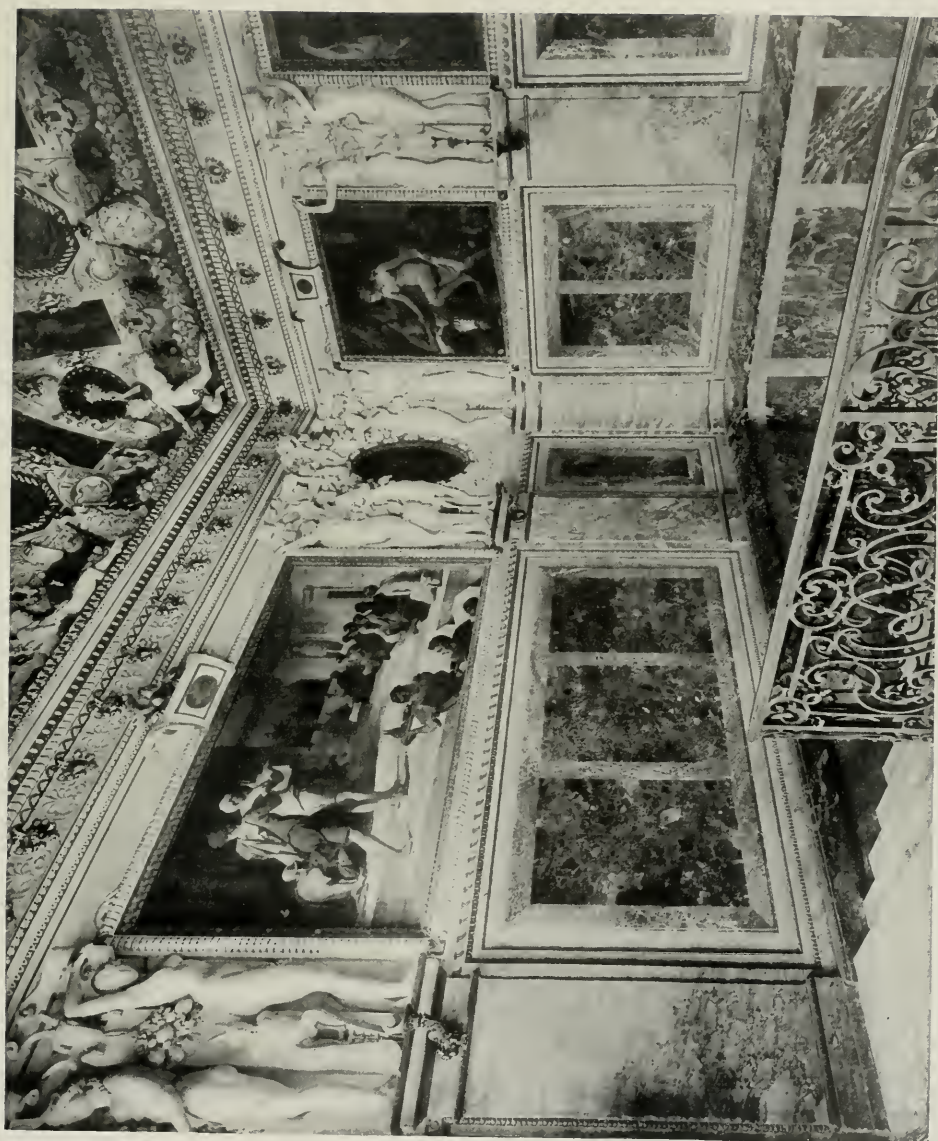


the turn of a pretty girl's head over her shoulder. It suggests a certain mystery, the promise of possible good things awaiting you at the top, the not-quite-knowing just how delightful the reward of your real welcome may be. It should be like the ascent of a hill in this, encouraging you to the trouble of mounting for the sake of that which, when the summit is reached, will lie outspread before you. For this reason a flight of steps which leads nowhere except into stretches of emptiness beyond has a rude and disappointing quality about it, chilling your enthusiasm, and checking you with a well-justified sense of disappointment and chagrin.

In houses where the lay-out of the street or grounds permits light to enter from several sides, and the hall and stairway fill the central part, as they did in the old New England house, the flight is often broken by landings. Above these landings, in the newer houses of to-day, windows are placed, sometimes of great architectural beauty. Hangings for them must depend, of course, upon the nearness of the neighbours' eyes. Although this arrangement of the stairs brings the first turn of the steps facing the front door, you are not made to feel their obtrusiveness. That uncomfortable impression is spared you by two things—the breaking of the flight by the platform, and the introduction of the windows, which carry the vision off as it were.

These platforms are treated with formality, nothing being permitted to detain you except a chair, perhaps,





HEAD OF MAIN STAIRWAY AT THE PALACE OF FONTAINEBLEAU







in case your breath is lost. A table sometimes holds flowers or plants, a pedestal supports a Greek urn, but the unimportant and the trivial are not permitted.

The insistence upon this point may seem unnecessary, and would be did not one find it everywhere violated. The temptation to the inconsequential mind is always to overdo, to go about hunting for places for things, instead of putting away and out of sight those things which do not belong in given places. The too obtrusive palm with its projecting branches has no right on a stairway up and down which people may be forced to hurry. Neither have pots of flowers tied up with ridiculous paper and bows of ribbon to match. Nor yet again have books; yet books, odd as it may seem, are sometimes introduced into formal halls, the niches along a flight of stairs being all too frequently furnished with shelves, holding ornamental bindings. The only thing proper for such a niche is a bust or a bronze, something which suggests an architectural forethought, a preparation for good things.

The mental constitution of those who are constantly breaking the perfectly obvious laws of a proper distribution of household properties is an ever-present subject of perplexity to one who enters many portals. One cannot help wondering of what, for instance, men and women are made who make it necessary for themselves to leave the quiet of a library and descend half-way down a flight of stairs, in order to get a book which never should have been placed there. Nothing



but the exigencies of apartment life warrants such a distribution of books, and even then they would not be found on flights of steps, since few new apartments are provided with them.

Now and then one finds an Eastern rug tortured into service as a stair-covering, its figures crinkled into the confining grip of the stair-rod. This use of the rug is an illegitimate application of a beautiful object, designed to be outspread. Marble steps should be bare, and all stair-coverings should be plain and uniform in tint. On colonial stairs, with their delicate spindle railings, the carpet was held in place by brass stair-rods kept as carefully polished as the silver on the sideboard, or the knocker on the front door. The newel-posts were charming, surmounted by a brass ornament or a glass ball, and in our houses copied from these models these questions of detail are always considered.

I cannot close this chapter without referring to two charming stairways both of which are in country houses. In each instance, one must turn a corner to reach them, the length of the hall being left to convey its full purpose and impressiveness. Round the corner, then, of one hall rises a carved oak stair-case, its flight broken by a platform that is lighted by a leaded window. From this window one sees a stretch of lovely country, broken by hills and brightened by a river. Nothing else, however, is allowed to distract you as you turn.





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

STAIRWAY IN UPPER HALL OF MR. H. W. POOR'S HOUSE, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







In the other instance, the hall itself gives you a view of outside things. At one end and at right angles to the entrance door is a large plate-glass window: against this trees grow so close that they seem to be brought into the house itself. Not to make the arrangement too obvious the space under the window is finished in carved stone, from which an Italian fountain plays into a stone pool, filled with water plants and vines that grow up to the window. From the other end of the hall and through the door opening out on the terrace, one gets a view of forty miles of verdure, a line of hills against the faint horizon. The stairs are found where they will interfere with no one, turning in, as they do, from an angle of the hall nearest the entrance door. A platform breaks the flight half-way up, securing privacy for the final pause. Above this platform is a window of stained glass, with softly tempered lights and tones, recalling the woodlands.



## Chapter III

### Dining-Rooms

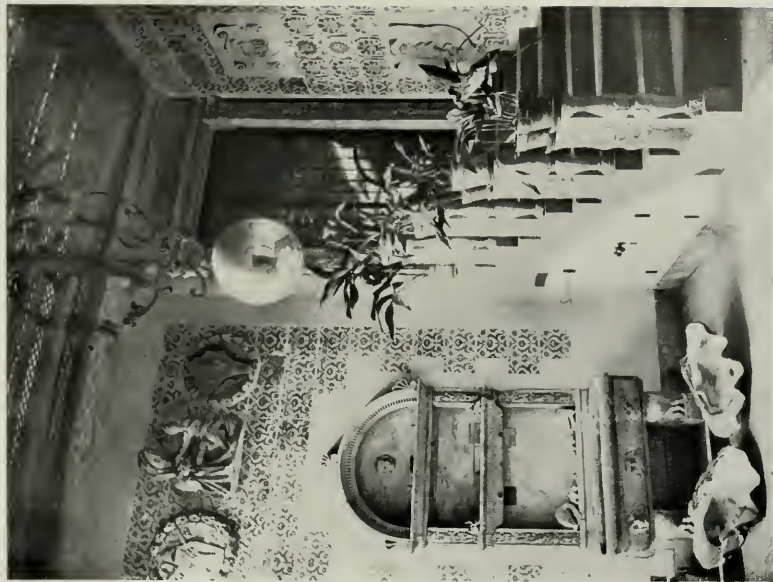
**I**N a country so distinguished for hospitality as our own it is hardly to be wondered at that our dining-rooms should have reached their present stage of magnificence. Fewer mistakes, too, are apparent in them; possibly because, as has just been hinted, the love of dinner-giving is strong among us, and certain customs long established. Then, again, the question of furniture being more or less limited to a question of sideboards and chairs, the householder has suffered fewer temptations to obtrude, as in salons and libraries, individual idiosyncrasies of taste—those little and distracting notes which go to the making of such misery in rooms where a feeling for the best has not been cultivated and mental limitations obtrude themselves—the not knowing exactly how to prepare for various unaccustomed social departures.

In dining-rooms, moreover, there is less chance to blunder over questions of colour, that grievous stumbling-block to rich and poor alike, and which is independent of the purchasing power, and as problem-





"A DOORWAY PLACED ROUND A CORNER FORMED BY AN  
ANGLE OF THE WALL"



McKim, Mead & White, Architects

LANDING ON STAIRWAY IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE STAN-  
FORD WHITE, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







atical in costly fabrics as in those which are purchased for a song. For the feeling for tones is a gift, its possession conveyed by fine, undeniable, and subtly conveyed evidences, about which there can be no dispute. It is the absence of this gift which mars many an interior, just as irrevocably as a painter's in-appreciation of colour-values mars his canvas, though his drawing may be good. On the other hand, how beautiful are those rooms, whether sumptuous or simple, in which the right relations of tones have been observed. What repose one feels in them, what delight, and how few of those there are!

There is still another reason why our dining-rooms are for the most part good. In them the architect has been allowed freer scope, not being confronted at so many turns by the insistence upon a respect being paid certain family customs, brought over, maybe, from another environment, as when a salon is not permitted to retain its purely formal character, but must possess corners in which a child may lounge, or the daily practice of the piano go on. The architect, therefore, has in many instances given us rooms of great beauty, which even without furniture are a delight in themselves—often a greater delight, alas! since the introduction of accessories has sometimes spoiled everything. Thus I know a dining-room of noble proportions; finished in a delightfully grained mahogany, which has been altogether ruined by stuffy hangings, burdened with enormous cords and tassels



like those found in old-fashioned clubs, the spaces about the windows filled with upholstered sofas and chairs—and this in a country house, where no exigencies of space, as in conventional city houses, make necessary the use of the dining-room for the reading of the morning paper, or the indulgence of the after-dinner cigar. And apart from all questions of taste or knowledge there is a reason for our protests against certain of these desecrations, since the last thing one wants in a dining-room of any kind is a feeling of stuffiness—hangings which will hold for the space of so much as a moment the faintest suggestion of yesterday's feast. One wants cheer, the perennially fresh and unspoiled, the charm of the single occasion as it were, like that which one feels in the flowers adorning the table. The frame for all this may vary, be dark or light, according as one wants to feel shut in at the dining hour or expansive, the eye being carried beyond as by a view from the window, or by the airy lightness of the surrounding walls. But, whether dark or light, this frame must first accentuate the feeling of the present and the evanescent hour.

The most important dining-rooms of to-day are hung with tapestries, or panelled in woods, the lines being broken up by the introduction of columns, sometimes of marble and sometimes of wood. The treatment of the wood varies: now it is painted and relieved by colour, now stained, and now only polished. It is often carved, but when the beauty of the grain has





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

DINING-ROOM OF MR. H. W. POOR'S HOUSE, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







been considered the surfaces are left plain. Oak, chestnut, walnut, mahogany, and satinwood are among those oftenest seen.

When oak has been treated with a dull grey stain having in it the merest suggestion of green, like that which one finds on oak benches scattered through French forests, one has a wall surface of exquisite charm, into which almost any mood may melt. There is a dining-room in town finished in this way, the oak being broken into panels of delightful proportions, running from the baseboard to the panelled ceiling, which is upheld by a cornice. The faint suggestion of the green seems almost to have demanded the presence of the growing things found in this particular room, in one swelled corner of which, and against the light of the window, there is a white marble Byzantine temple, ornamented by a line of green mosaic, its interior filled with masses of azaleas and maidenhair, played upon by sprays of trickling water. When it is remembered how seldom the necessity for growing things is felt in most dining-rooms, it will easily be seen how surely the subtler relationships have been considered in this one.

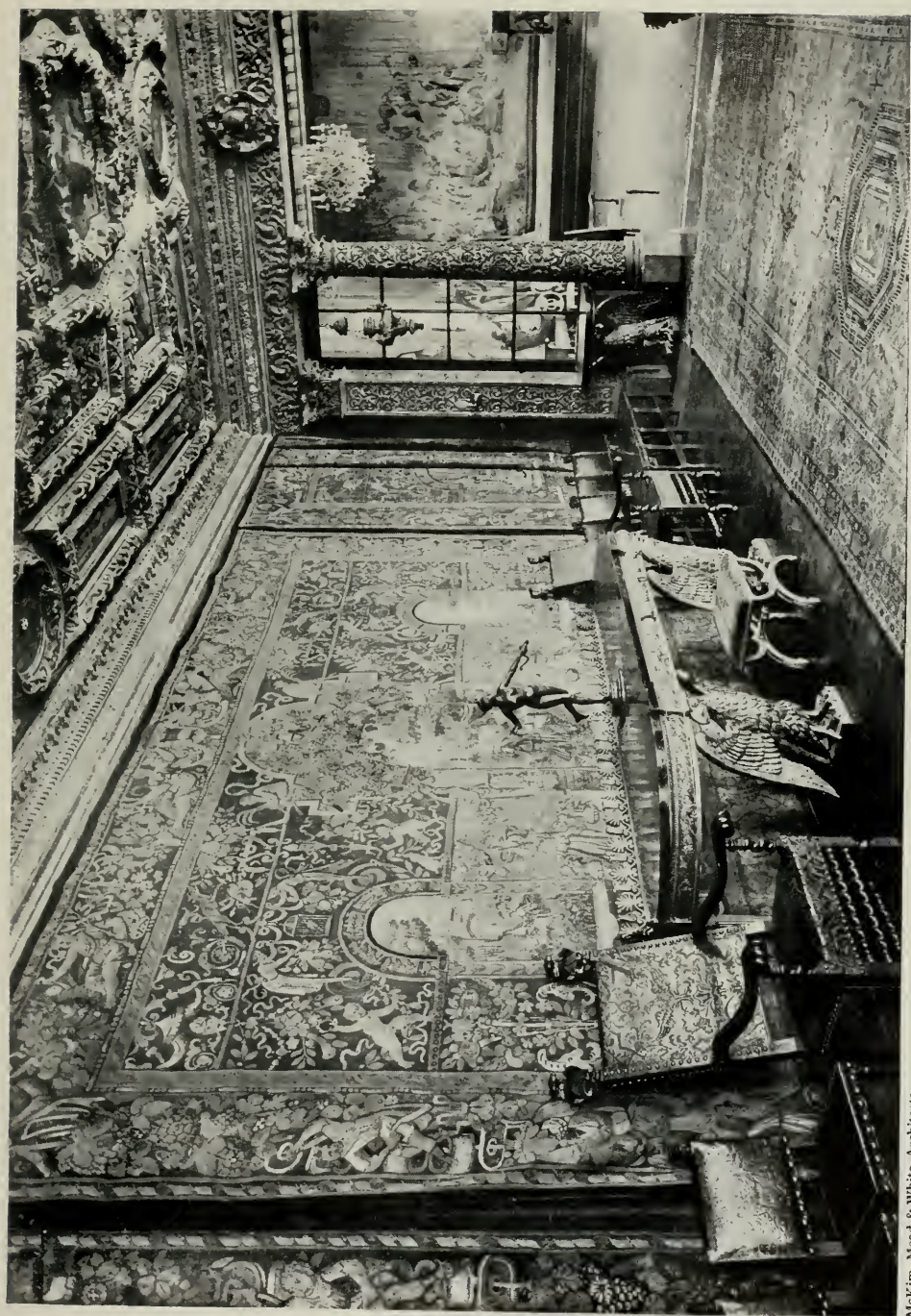
And without this consideration, no room, no matter where it may be found, can be expected to convey a sense of entire satisfaction. For decoration must submit itself to the same laws as those governing the rest of the arts. Questions of relationships must enter in—relationships in colour, design, and ap-



pointment. There must also be considered another important question, relating to the treatment of subordinate parts, especially of those which are more or less concealed. Some decorators go so far as to declare, indeed, that the best things in a house ought always to be placed where one comes upon them unexpectedly—never, of course, where they are obtruded into being designedly or inappropriately conspicuous; as in extremely exaggerated cases of unfitness one sometimes finds a housekeeper of limited possessions displaying a highly ornamental lamp among the inflammable draperies of a window, for no other purpose than that the street may be regaled, and her good fortune paraded.

In the dining-room, then, of which we have been speaking, there is a doorway leading into the pantry—a doorway placed round a corner formed by an angle of the wall, and therefore not to be immediately perceived by those who enter the room. Of carved stone, and ornamented with sculptured figures, this doorway, however, is one before which those who discover it love to linger, so full of beauty is it, so delightful in its colour and proportions, and so respectful of its uses! How often does one find a pantry door like it? No screen, however superb in itself, could replace the quiet dignity of this entrance, nor could any doorway more or less conspicuous command for itself the homage which this one excites by its silent, self-respecting seclusion.





McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

DINING-ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE STANFORD WHITE, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY.







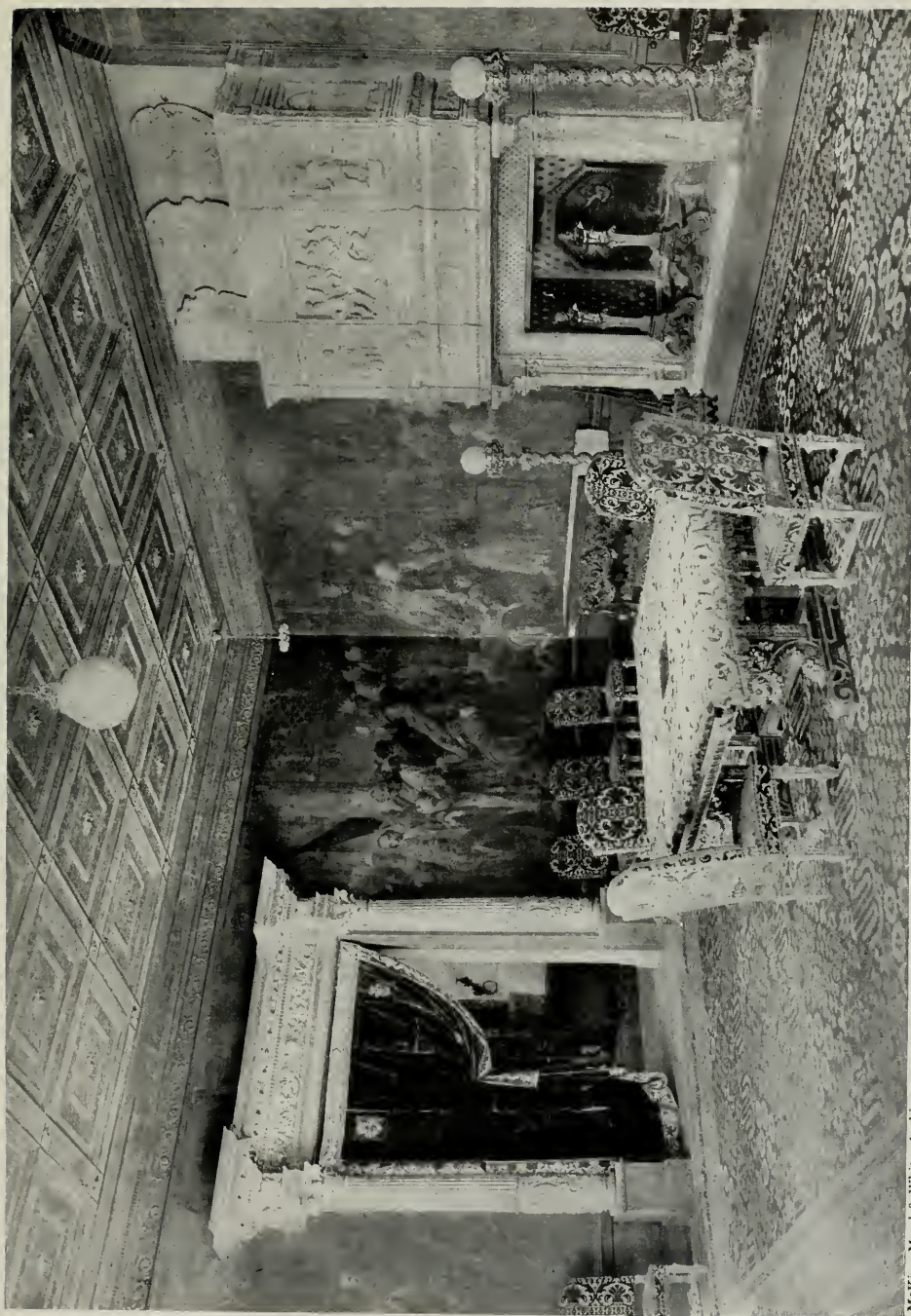
And, while still discussing this room, it may be as well to draw attention to still another of its lovely elements. The plants introduced are *not* palms, those much-used and over-abused potted affairs, which are considered necessary wherever a floral decoration is required, and without regard to their surroundings. In certain interiors of palatial proportions, they are, when massed, all that is possible. I mean no criticism of these, but for all that no one can deny that we have all been suffering a kind of madness for the palm in a pot. Go into almost any house, open almost any book on decoration, and, as some clever man pointed out to me the other day, the potted palm will be discovered, placed somewhere, anywhere, without regard to its fitness for that place, and almost always without adding to it one element of grace or beauty. Yet a palm most people will have, even at times in a bathroom. It is so easily ordered, and saves so much expenditure of thought! The palm has little beauty when placed alone. To feel its charm one should see it in masses, feel it in suggestion with other greens as one does in tropical gardens. When scattered at random in houses, not massed as it should be, such beauty as it possessed out of doors is lost, no matter how gorgeous the pot that holds it, or costlily the marble urn. No real plant- or flower-lover uses it in such indiscriminate fashion. He seeks for that which will lend itself to the quiet of the indoor life. But then, a volume might be written on this one



subject alone. My object in touching at all upon the subject here is to prove how wide the field may be, and how necessary it is that a certain intelligence shall be exercised. For the evidence of a right appreciation of values is as essential where plants are used in decoration as where any other appointment of the house may be concerned. The individual taste, the æsthetic equipment, must as certainly be proved, although the necessity for proving it is seldom touched upon.

There are other dining-rooms in panelled oak, where none of this demand for growing things is felt, possibly because the darker tones of the wood-work suggest none, or possibly because the out-of-doors is felt through the windows. This is particularly true of country dining-rooms, and of one especially which I have in mind, where the oak is almost black. Here the necessity for a certain relief is satisfied by the green of the tapestry hangings, fitted over doorways and windows, giving to the room just the suggestion of tone which transforms it at once. Into this room, again, the appreciation of fine relationships enters. The windows are leaded, and the visitor is spared the shock of being confronted by enormous sheets of solid plate glass, a feature which spoils so many another panelled chamber. Over the leaded panels the sheerest net is hung, in no way interfering with the feeling of green stretches beyond. Nor does any confusion of variously considered draperies, sometimes so neces-





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

DINING-ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE W. C. WHITNEY, NEW YORK CITY







sary in town, mar the general impression. The fitted tapestry of lambrequin and curtain breaks up the line, gives colour, but preserves the dignity of the openings. It betrays, too, a sureness of touch, and inspires you with the conviction that the problem has been thought out from the beginning. The side-board in this room is of very old oak, absolutely simple in its lines, and suggesting great antiquity, as do the serving-tables and chairs. One knows at once that English traditions have been followed, and the Jacobean period—but then styles are an ever-present snare in these days, among which even angels sometimes fear to tread! One feels, however, the epoch here, and recognises the knowledge displayed in details, especially in those which concern themselves with the distribution of lights and the form of the fixtures.

Now and then one comes across a dining-room in which one feels as surely that the architect's work in its finer touches has been subordinated to, or at least guided by, the taste of the owner. I know one, for example, an oblong room of stately proportions with a swelled bay at one end, its opening supported by two marble columns showing seven colours, supporting a capital of more than usual delicacy and grace. Two wooden columns, once part of some Sicilian chapel, form the framework of the entrance door, the over-door being finished in an arch of the same material and design. A blue, now faded into charming



## The House Dignified

tones, colours the wood, while over this blue there is wrought a design in gold, showing leaves and vines, carved in relief, among which charming cupids disport themselves. The sideboard, from some other part of the chapel, follows the same design and colour. No silver is permanently displayed on it; some rare old drinking-cups and chalices are set out instead and protected by glass fitted to the front. For among the blues and golds, it was instantly felt, silver, however rich in itself would have struck a jarring note.

The wall-spaces of this room are covered with tapestry, in which again the blue is felt, now in a patch of sky, and now in the sweep of a royal robe. The ceiling is carved, the cupids of the columns being repeated here, while the panels are filled with lovely designs in colour. The lights are hidden in the cornice, but there are two huge gold candelabra, resting on ornamented columns, placed on either side of the room. The chairs are covered with a blue, deep enough in tone to be felt rather than seen, the backs being capped by small gilded ornaments. The curtains are of blue, showing the same charming subordination of tone. Thus the room has everywhere been made to preserve a certain *ensemble*, being tied together by colour as it were, a colour so reposeful and enveloping that at no time is one suddenly aroused to look at some special object. The influence of it all comes gradually, and never as a question of mere magnificence, but as that of a lovely atmosphere in





A MODEST DINING-ROOM—"BREEZY-MEADOW," MRS. KATE SANBORN'S FARM, METCALFE, MASS.







which individual elements of beauty gradually unfold themselves. And this, it would seem, is the final requirement of all interiors. They are first enveloping. You may get their atmosphere at once, be played upon by their colour, and feel their charm, but the perception of even their unrivalled details must come to you later. Occasions must open your eyes, moods, necessities. They are like the human character in that, and must develop reserve powers, else all you thought excellent at first is as a mere flash in the pan, quickly past and forgotten.

No one who goes into the more important houses of the day can fail to be impressed by the fact that two orders of mind have been at work. There is first the colourist, the man who wants richness, warmth, tone, magnificence, at any cost. Then there is the man whose allegiance to the beauty of a line is unswerving, and who will not permit so much as a tone to distract you from the grace of an arch. Imagination has therefore run riot in some of our dining-rooms. Palaces and churches have been robbed to add to their splendours. Superb stuffs and hangings have been introduced, crystal lustres and silver lamps, with those sometimes of brass—that richest and most beautiful of all reflecting surfaces. In what are called our state dining-rooms, the models for which are either copies or adaptations of famous foreign rooms, the architect has allowed no limitations to his flights, but has gone on piling splendour on splendour, adding



arch to arch, and pillar to pillar, splashing on gold with reckless profusion, and hanging crystals wherever their gleam could make for a greater resplendence.

In contrast to these, there are to be found dining-rooms which by very contrast seem austere, nothing being permitted, even in the way of colour, which might possibly interfere with the repose of a given line. I have one such room in mind, the white wooden surfaces of which are broken into panels forming sunken arches of charming design. A soft pale grey hangs at the windows, the sideboard is filled with cut glass, no colour being anywhere permitted. Yet, oddly enough, no sense of coldness is conveyed; rather a feeling of satisfaction and refreshment, a feeling impossible in any other white room where the touch has been less certain, and the proportions less carefully preserved. I have seen other rooms where the same attempt has been made, but they have been white rooms relieved by a colour, and always demanding the extraneous, to give them a habitable quality. A repose, difficult to describe, steals over the visitor, in this one. The eye, never carried anywhere against its will, is yet made to rest comfortably wherever it strays. The table, too, with its flowers, gains a new quality, becoming as it were the centre for disseminating cheer, rather than the point toward which the interests converge.

A strict accord to periods can be followed in dining-rooms without suggesting, as in certain salons, the



need of adjustments to modern social requirements. For they dined well in England at least, a century or more ago, and in environments which, for beauty of detail and provision for pleasure, have never been outrivalled by any other school. A dining-room, therefore, copied from those of Great Britain, and appointed as they were, is sure to be one possessing all that makes for dignity, hospitality, and impressiveness. In one of our town houses copied from an Adam in London, the dining-room has all these enviable qualities. It is of white, with door and window openings following reposeful classic lines. The same severity yet charm of line, though more delicate, is seen in the fireplace. To relieve the effect of too much white, four great paintings, dark and rich in tone, fill as many panels, running to the ceiling. Four paintings of smaller size are introduced into the ceiling. Mahogany furniture is used, the sideboard set out with old English silver of wonderfully beautiful forms. To further relieve the room some wonderful tripods appear, their basins holding growing plants. Nothing that is not genuine is permitted here. Any of the Georges would have felt at once at home.

The need of an occasional escape from the very size of some of these apartments has led to the creation of some lovely breakfast-rooms, places in which the intimate word is now and then possible over the morning coffee, or even a dinner may be had, when the stress of more exacting obligations has laid waste the



powers. These rooms are never large and are almost always simple, in their freedom from excess of ornamentation, although the elements entering into their construction may be of the richest character. One such room stands pre-eminent. Its doors are of unusual beauty, each having a large egg-shaped panel of exquisitely grained and highly polished yellow satinwood, framed by a wood of darker tone. These woods appear everywhere about the room, and are particularly happy in the window framing. The walls are covered with a pale green striped silk, while the ceiling, in still paler green, is ornamented with white trceries in some lovely Adam design. The egg-shaped table, like the doors, is made of polished satinwood, bordered by marquetry in darker wood. Two unique commodes in marquetry complete the furnishings. The silver is old English.

Sometimes one of these breakfast-rooms is copied after an English model in oak or chintz, and sometimes after one of France with panelled walls and mirrors. Again it is made to express simply some happy combination of architectural features, as when mauve and violet, gold and white, or gold and blue, or pale creams and silver enter in. Something still more important is now and then attempted, and marble is employed. Opening out of a small conservatory in an up-town house there is such a room, its domed white ceiling supported by marble columns of great delicacy and grace. Rugs are scattered on the floor.



The eastern sun, playing over the plants and catching the iridescent light of tiny water sprays, flings them about over column and cloth. An ideal place surely in which to attune one's self for the daily distractions of the street.

With settings so elaborate as some of those just described, it follows as a matter of course that the appointments of the table must have a proportionate splendour. And there is hardly any extreme of luxury and extravagance to which the modern requirement has not carried us. All Europe has been ransacked for these, and entire services of gold are not uncommon. Linens, too, are sometimes woven following some design specially reserved for a particular householder. Laces of great richness are applied both in table-cloth and napkins. Glass is blown to order, silver beaten, and porcelains baked. Yet here again, and once more, I must dwell upon the individual touch. None of this magnificence has real value without this touch. Nothing must look as if it had been left for mere money to buy, certainly nothing in the way of a flower, though this unhappily is the impression which many a diner carries away. The conventional floral arrangement set down in the midst of the surrounding magnificence cheapens everything, showing that no more attention has been paid to the feast for the eye than to that for the palate. And yet it would seem that flowers should do this very thing, carrying the eye away from the plate, as conversation carries the



thought. One does not want to be made to remember how many dozen American Beauties were in the room, but only to carry away the impression of fragrance and colour. Some presiding intelligence must be at work; some assurance felt that it has been exercised. I remember one dinner in which the splendours of surrounding tapestries and gold, all the elaboration of sauces and entrées, all the array of fruits both in and out of season, were forgotten in the beauty of a bowl of faint mauve and white lilacs, arranged so that the delicate green of the leaf and the faint tracings of the dark stems made a picture that lifted the dinner into a never-forgotten memory of the satisfied æsthetic sense.

For some reason or other the more important town dining-rooms of to-day indicate no tendency to return to Colonial models. For these one must look among the simpler houses, the houses done over, or those newly built on private country places. Yet Colonial dining-rooms were always dignified, and full of hospitable spirit, living embodiments, many of them, of undeniable and delightful traditions. The polish of their mahogany, both on table and in wainscot, and the gleam of their crystal and silver, possessed a charm which was never to be denied. Brocades were at home in these old rooms, laces, powdered locks. Fine customs prevailed, and courtliness was not uncommon. For all that, no modern householder of enormous wealth thinks of reviving their memories, although the prevailing notes were those of refinement and quiet charm.



## Chapter IV

### Salons and Drawing-Rooms

ANY one attempting a discussion of American houses as they are developing around us to-day must inevitably, as the discussion proceeds, become more and more conscious of—even to the point of being hampered by—a certain feeling of reluctance, in regard to approaching at all so delicate a field, one in which the subject-matter, from its very essence, involves questions of encroachment upon private reserves.

The work of the architect presents to the critic no such embarrassing issues for the architects. His results, so far as their exteriors are concerned, are open-air contributions to the æsthetic progress of his time—public properties, as it were, challenging comment. Even his interior work, if it possesses merit, is like every other work of art, and must subject itself to a criticism in which, when final judgments are rendered, no questions of violating laws of hospitality, and none of respecting affronted dignities, can have weight. It is where the owner's work becomes apparent, that the reviewer's embarrassment begins,







is confined to a limited area. Certainly, none of it has as yet led to such a revival of the arts as would entitle their work to take rank with that of the great women of old. Most of what they have done, too, as it comes under the jurisdiction of what is called the home, is naturally protected from the inroads of public curiosity. One feels like a housebreaker, who enters to take notes.

In no part of his work, therefore, does the reviewer experience a greater hesitation in speaking, than when he is called upon to discuss the salons and drawing-rooms of the day—those parts of a house which are set apart for the reception and entertainment of guests, and which should, in the very nature of things, represent the crowning glory of a dwelling-place. For in salons, as any one must recognise, no questions of utility pure and simple should have been compelling, making a justifiable though regrettable excuse for the disregard of the gracious and the beautiful. One recognises instantly that here is a region where a man or woman must prove other things besides a possession of the domestic virtues. In a salon, indeed, one must give evidence of one's all-round equipment for the place that one holds in the world, prove how well one knows how to carry on the social relations, what one has to contribute in the way of grace and charm, of fine taste and cultivated instincts, of a love and understanding of the beautiful, not only for one's own delectation, but as a setting, to lend harmony to the

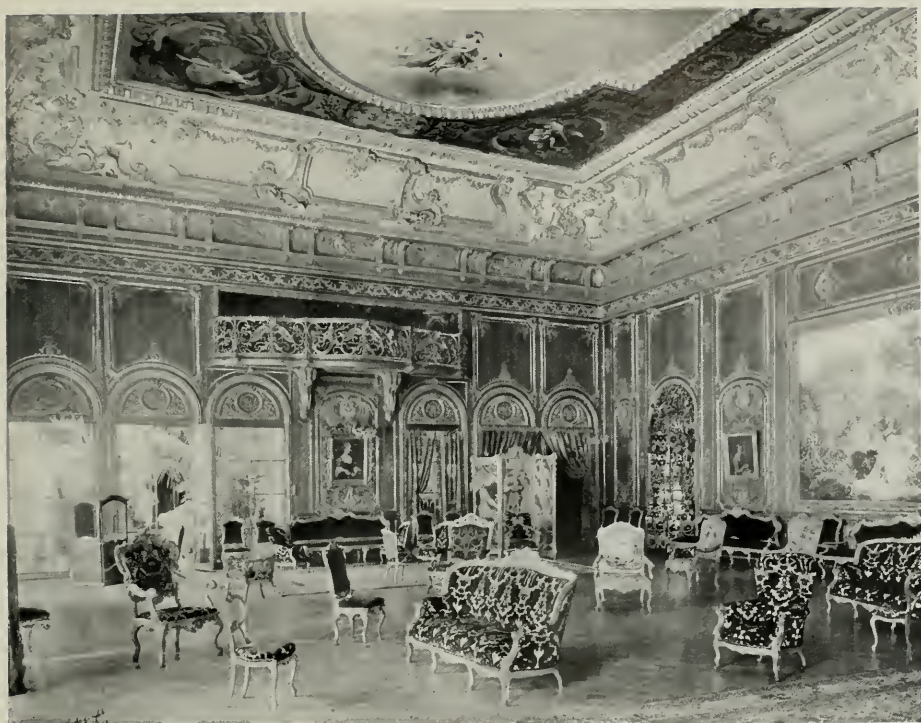


intercourse of friends. And this test must hold good, wherever the room set apart for the reception of guests may be, whether in what are called the palaces of the day, or in the smallest cottages or flats.

In the parlour, or salon, or drawing-room, or whatever it may be called, one finds, then, the real man or woman, and knows, without further question, just what their qualifications may be, how much *savoir-faire* they may possess, how much ease, how delicate an appreciation for the subtler requirements, how much self-control, how great a regard for all that goes to the making of social relations what they should be—a fine art.

And since a salon must and does stand for all this, in it lie most of the difficulties encountered in the discussion of particular houses. For it is not enough merely to bring together one's finest possessions. Selections must be made, and the same fine harmonies observed as in the seating of guests about a table. Yet this is a requirement usually disregarded. Men or women who have begun to travel and amass are unable to resist the temptation to display their purchases, lucky finds, or brilliant discoveries. Very few have the self-control of the man who, having purchased a wonderful old stone fireplace, kept it in a storehouse for fifteen years, until he could build a room where it might be at home. Thus there are drawing-rooms in which one is called upon to stumble over mediæval strong boxes set out by tables—trunks,





McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

BALLROOM IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE W. C. WHITNEY, NEW YORK CITY.



McKim, Mead & White, Architects

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE TOWN HOUSE OF MR. H. W. POOR, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY







really, which ought to be in a hall upstairs. One sees, too, Jacobean bedsteads, obviously intended for sleeping apartments or boudoirs, pulled into place by reading lamps; columns set up where they support nothing; weather-stained statues which should be in a garden among the rose-trees, but are here drawn up by satin-covered chairs. Yet to these drawing-rooms much printed space has been given. Drawing-rooms! They are show rooms for unthinking collectors.

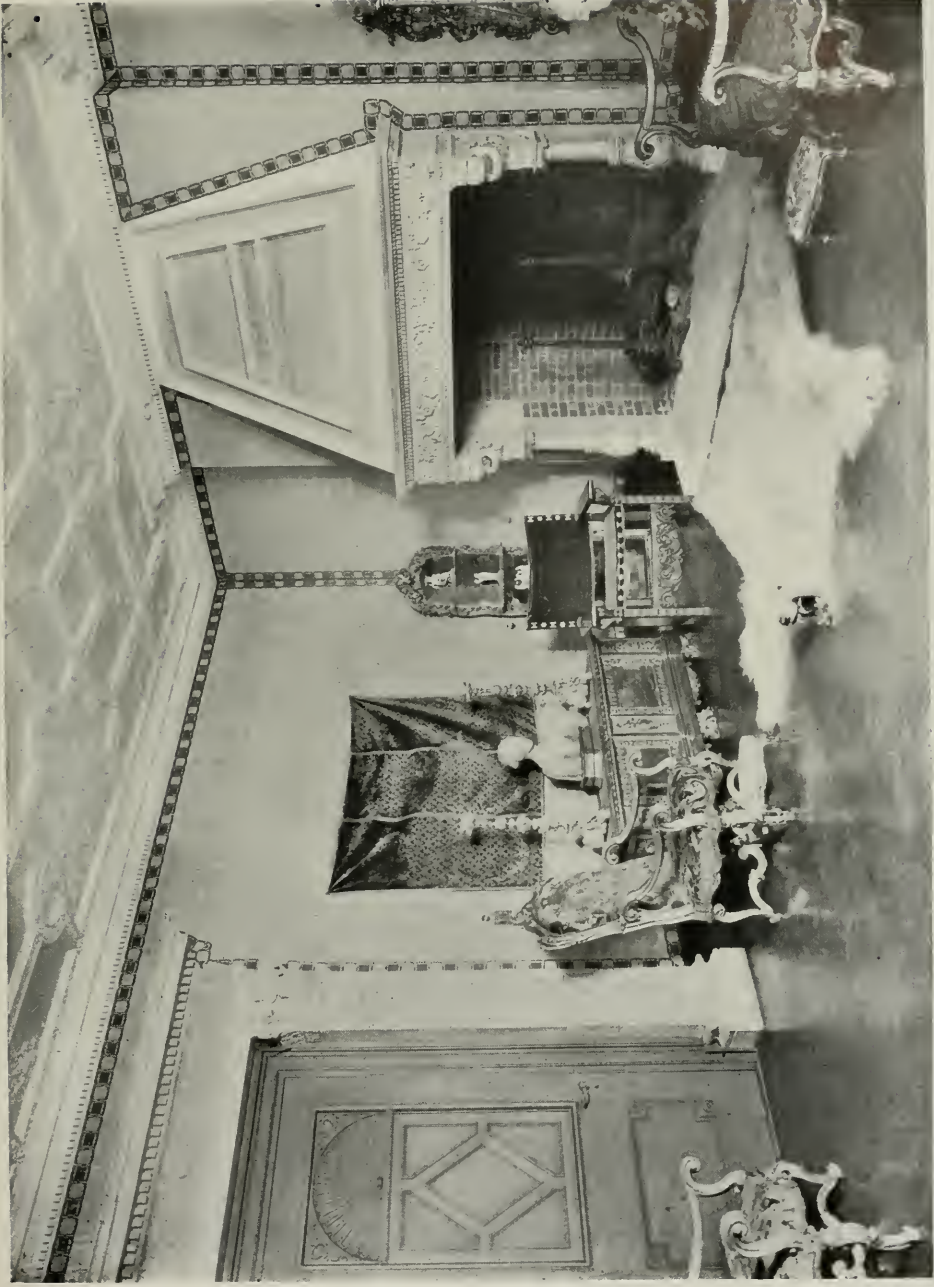
Not long since, a French writer counted thirty-three stag's-heads on the walls of one of our show country places, a house hung with wonderful Beauvais tapestry, and made splendid with furniture entitled to places in great museums. One such head might have suggested a compliment to the stag, or the prowess of the hunter, but with thirty-three one feels that even a stag might have turned. It reminds one of the story of some woman who bought, outright, twenty-six water-colours from a well-known English artist, to furnish the bedrooms of her country house. None of the stags here mentioned, by the way, had been shot by the owner of the house, nor yet by his friends, nor yet on his land; nor were they in a room set out with guns and other implements of the chase, but over the bookcases in the library. I, myself, have seen beautiful old stone carved tables, set out with silly little lamps having fringed silk shades; drawn up beside genuine Louis Quatorze chairs, exquisitely gilded and carved, and covered with an embossed velvet of the



time—chairs so compelling in their magnificence, that the business of any fortunate possessor should have been to search without ceasing, as some do, until the proper accompaniments in the way of lamps should be found. One cannot help feeling that the possession of beautiful objects entails great responsibility in their treatment. Nor can respect be withheld from the women who pay it.

That which strikes the observer most forcibly, indeed, are the unsuspected limitations of those occupying enviable positions, the mental awkwardness of men and women who do not know how to live with the rare objects around them, people who know how to be comfortable upstairs, perhaps, but who can never quite learn the secret of being gracious on the parlour floor. And sometimes it would seem that, as a nation, we need to be educated to the full meaning of salons. One does not have to be very old to remember a time when the very idea of a room obviously arranged for the reception of visitors was preached against and ridiculed, the real compliment to the guest being then declared to be a welcome to the more intimate side of family life, where father had just been reading, perhaps, or mother sewing. The disciples of that creed used to make it a rule to leave in their drawing-rooms evidences of a polite occupation. Crewels being then the fashion, strands of them were generally visible, laid out on a table as if just abandoned by fair fingers. And even now there are people who





T. Henry Kandall, Architect.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. H. W. POOR, TUXEDO, NEW YORK.







object to the idea of designating any room as a salon, who will have music rooms, libraries, west rooms, and east rooms, but who refuse to designate any one of them as places where conversation with the visitor can be carried on. They think such places too formal, not easily enough adapted to fun and pleasure—everybody in these days being too tired to talk, and everybody wanting to be amused.

The question of what particular character a salon shall assume, or how it shall be furnished, can only be decided when the question of what the rest of the house is to stand for has been settled, what the nature of its hospitality is to be, and on how large a scale that hospitality is to be carried on. One must know whether it is to be used for formal entertainments and gay diversions, for intimate talks over the teacup, or for intellectual diversions of a broader kind. Yet whatever the character, and however magnificent the scale, no salon, it seems to me, can be pronounced altogether satisfactory, which ignores the one supreme note of graciousness. It must look not only as if it were ready to receive you, but as if when doing so it meant to put you at your best, as would the tactful hostess herself. "How becoming this room is to everyone in it," I heard some dinner guests saying, not long since. And indeed the room was a beautiful frame for beautiful women and distinguished men.

This particular room is pure Louis Quinze—a white woodwork of charming tone, panelled in mirrors



and covered with a *boiserie* in gold, marvellously executed and so alluring in design that its lines delight the eye as music delights the ear. These walls are genuine, not copies, and of a richness and beauty not easy to describe. Everything in the room is genuine and old, indeed, except the bordered Savonnerie carpet (one of a soft grey, specially manufactured for it) and the flowered silk curtains (also specially woven). And when I say specially woven, I mean that not only was the order given, but that every single strand of silk has been selected with care, lived with for some time, and a sample made, so that just the right tones, and only they, should appear. The model itself, of course, was of the period. And it is just such care as this, which some few of the elect are willing to bestow, in the creation of their surroundings, which goes to make those few interiors that can be counted as real contributions to their time. The furniture of the room consists necessarily of consols, drawers, and tables, belonging to the time and unencumbered with the superfluous, a few pieces of Sèvres and other rare porcelains alone being allowed upon them. On the mantles are the clocks and candelabra of the period; in the fireplaces, the *chenets* belonging to the same epoch. The chairs and sofas are of tapestry, unique examples belonging to the history of their day. Not a book is visible, books not belonging here.

Now a room of this kind could be so formal as to be uninviting. It is in the arrangement of its various





Donn Barber, Architect

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF MR. E. C. CONVERSE, GREENWICH, CONN.

Photograph by Baker, New York







appointments that its feeling of graciousness is to be found—its grouping of chairs, its arrangement of tables always set out with rare flowers, its choice and distribution of lights—a point too often neglected. Everything helps the picture, as it were. People appear, and quite naturally, as part of a delightful composition. Nothing is obvious, and yet the whole effect is to bring out the best in every one, to give women the same sense of ease which Emerson said some women felt with well-fitted backs to their dresses.

It were foolish to urge the stupid claim that with such wealth of fine appointments, this note of graciousness to a guest is necessarily made easy; that with money any one can do anything, and should certainly know how to make even one's guests look well. The ability to do so is a gift, quite independent of accessories, and can be as well exercised in modest interiors, as in those whose beauties have just been described. Indeed, there are small parlours, having no right to be mentioned among these, in which the same study of graciousness to a guest has been made; where with lights and mirrors, massing of flowers and grouping of furniture, the sense of the becoming, though never by a too obvious composition, has been produced, so that each person is made part of a lovely picture.

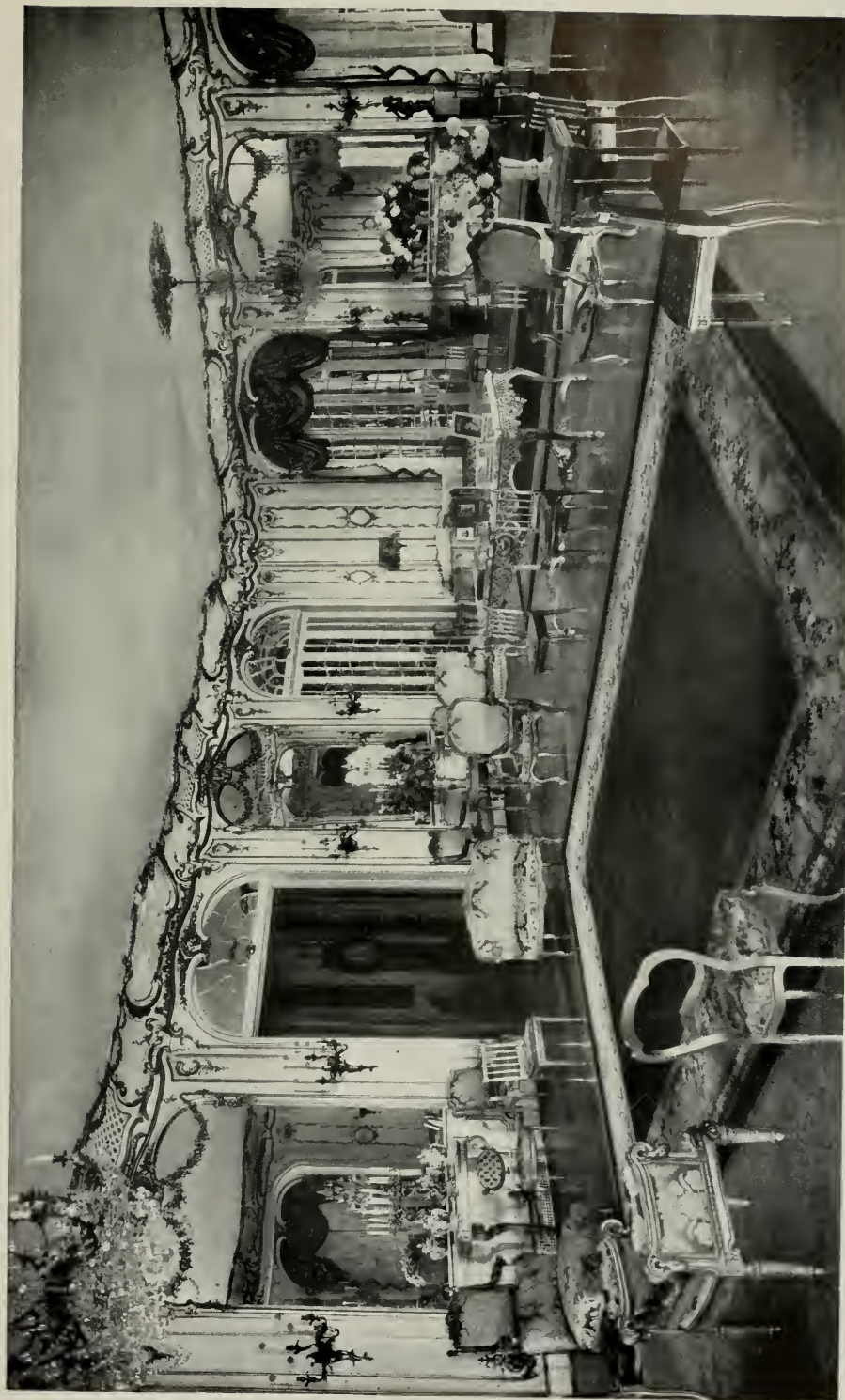
The severer and more classic lines of the Louis Sixteenth period enter into the construction of another salon, panelled in white wood, its gilded *boiserie* being of unusual grace. A superb crystal lustre of half a



hundred candles hangs in this room, while the appliqués against the walls are like the tapestry furniture just referred to—objects that have long since found their way into history. In this room, again, there are no distracting superfluities, no books, no little and uncomfortable things, no obvious touches of intimacy, no grouping together on small tables of meaningless silver ornaments, no photographs of modern beauties, or favourite grandchildren. These, with the books, are all upstairs. Yet in this room the guest is made at once to feel at ease, its beautiful tapestry furniture lending itself to the graceful, the amenable, the reposeful. No one who enters here feels in a hurry to depart—the conviction of the woman back of it all is too strong.

One feels the same sense of graciousness in another drawing-room, which follows no period, yet in which everything is old and interesting, and each thing of beauty in itself. The room is of superb proportions, with huge carved stone fireplaces at either end. Opposite the wide stone entrance, framed and hung in embossed velvets of marvellous tone, is a bay-window over twenty feet wide, backed with growing plants set down on the floor, a composition of perennial joy. The ceiling is old Venetian, its panels filled with paintings. The walls are hung with tapestries in which the colours glow. Everything in the room is of large and generous proportions, rich in colour and texture. The sofas are ample, the chairs, with their richly





Photograph by Alman, New York

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF MRS. WILLIAM ASTOR, NEWPORT, R. I.







carved frames and covered with velvet and silk, make superb settings for the figure. The tables are broad and beautifully carved. The ancient wedding-chests are ample, and the pieces set out on them are objects of beauty. Rare and beautiful things, indeed, are everywhere, yet never obtruded. Nothing is overdone, or placed where it might interfere with the supreme motive of it all—comfort and warmth, but comfort and warmth that come from a choice of colour, tactful consideration, from the eye being constantly fed and satisfied, and above all the feeling of the human note, the note of the woman who loves it all, and who in loving it has made it a contribution to your life.

For excellence in houses does not involve simply a rigid adherence to style, good as that adherence may be when a style is attempted. It really means an expression of humanity in its higher, broader sense, the feeling of the controlling spirit, the conviction of one's having understood and known the things about her, and who, having believed in them, makes you welcome among them. A strict adherence to style is certainly no less evident in one other lovely salon that I know. There is white in it, and there is gold, and there are superb hangings, beautiful pieces of furniture, exquisite porcelains, and three panels of the walls, filled with as many full-length portraits of beautiful young women. Some people call it a French room, but nobody has ever been able to tell why, or to settle upon the epoch. And nobody



should want to, so lovely is it of its kind, so adapted to all that goes to make lovely the gentle amenities of life. I went in there one snowy afternoon, and found an old lady pouring tea, and all at once and for the first time I felt that old ladies ought always to be pouring tea in just such rooms as this. Suddenly, too, as I think it always should, the keenness for details dropped away, only the atmosphere of something rare and choice remaining, an atmosphere made vibrant by cultivated sympathies. From all of which it can be seen that the charm of each salon just described really means the charm of the women who have created them.

There, are, of course, salons which the architect has given us, so beautiful in themselves that, even without furniture, one sits down and loses one's self in a sense of beauty and proportion, as the favoured few must who are admitted to certain rooms, for instance, at Versailles. Happily, too, there are some such rooms in our country, although too often they are destroyed by the colours introduced. For an exercise of the colour sense is necessary in all decoration, and without it the most generous of intentions must fail. When one finds it, one thrills, and instinctively yields a homage. This colour sense is, however, rare. Some women, under the guidance of their decorators, begin well, and then forget! Little things prove too tempting, odd sofa cushions, a bit of rare silk on a table, a lamp-shade just out of key, a piece of por-





Carrère & Hastings, Architects

DRAWING-ROOM OF A HOUSE AT BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Photograph by Baker, New York







celain that quarrels with its neighbour, blue greens and yellow greens side by side; reds that run in two different directions at once; and then—though they never can tell why—the charm of the salon has fled.

There is one salon which I like to remember when thinking of what colour may be. The room belongs to a country house and is made entirely of grey stone—walls, floor, and ceiling,—a grey stone soft and reposeful in tone. The fireplace and some of the panels are carved, as well as the door-frames. Over the mantle there is a niche holding a bust of Voltaire. No other decorations are seen. The floors are covered with rugs and bear-skins. The note of colour comes in with the green velvet brocade which covers the superb Louis Quatorze chairs and sofas, and which hangs again at the windows. The combination of the greys and greens is with the note of yellow from the gilding irresistibly lovely, like that which lends such subtle charm to the purple greys of French beech-tree trunks with their delicate mantlings of green.

And there is still another salon, also in a country house, where the colour has a refinement and charm so rare that one becomes lost in satisfaction. The room overlooks a terraced garden in which fountains play in the sunlight. Beyond these stretches a beautiful country, a broad silver band of a river, with the green of mountains beyond, extending for miles and miles till their distant summits become purple. One wants in such a room the repose of something tender and



soft, and that is just what has been given. Here, then, are soft silver greys and golds, broken with touches of blue. The floor of the room is of oak. The Renaissance fireplace and door-frame are of soft grey carved stone. The ceiling is grey and gold. The walls are covered with a delicate grey-toned silk brocatelle, fastened round the edges with a dull gold braid. Quaint and soft-toned ancient tapestries hang on the walls, framed with carved gilded wood. The curtains are of velvet; ashes of silver they seem in one light, ashes of roses in another, so delicate are the lights upon them, but a soft *café au lait* in reality. A blue braid binds these, and blue appears again on the sofa cushions, on table mats, and in the tapestry. Thus blue and gold, which makes everywhere a charming combination, appears here, but so softened, so kindly chosen, that one gets all the sentiments of the past, even where a modern stuff, like that of the portière, has been introduced over the carved oak door.

Some splendid effects are produced in these days by the use in salons of marble or wooden columns introduced about the doorways. One sees them in many of the important salons giving distinction to entrances. Even when they make no architectural pretence of supporting a framework, they are, when low enough, often placed on either side of a portal, as one sees them in the Musée Cluny, and made to hold large church candlesticks or other important pieces having artistic value. Tapestries and velvets,





Photograph by Baker, New York

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF THE LATE MR. AUGUST BELMONT, NOW THE RESIDENCE OF MR. PERRY BELMONT, NEWPORT, R. I.







satins and silks of the richest description, are employed as hangings, superb old stuffs, to supply which some church or palace has been denuded. Marbles appear in the construction, some that were carved centuries ago, and woods that have taken as many years to tone; ceilings that were once the boast of ancestral homes, and chairs in which kings have sat, thus repeating the history of all revivals in which a love of the artistic prevailed, when Greece was robbed to furnish Italy, and Italy to embellish France. And these salons with their splendours are found everywhere, distributed throughout the country in unexpected places, forming centres of interest which in a generation to come may be still more widely felt, and perhaps lead to the development of an original art among us. Great dependence indeed has been placed upon these accessories, and not so much upon the creation of rooms which would stand more or less by themselves as when wood or marble is used exclusively, and the architect has created an interior in which decoration is not so much an accessory as an integral part of the construction.

Of these, we have many interesting examples. Thus there are salons of French walnut with panelled ceilings, the *boiserie* framing panels with exquisitely rounded arches. The hangings are in red or low in tone. Into rooms like these, one can rightly introduce only the very chaste and exquisite, appliquéés which are observant of beauty of line, tables that suggest



a respect not only for proportions, but for the material of which they are made. Even the flowers must be carefully chosen, and the vases that hold them must be beautiful in themselves. And the temptation to dwell upon the consideration paid to these details is almost irresistible, so altogether delightful is the impression made by them, so compelling to one's admiration of the man or woman who has had the courage to respect only the finer necessities and conventions.



## Chapter V

### Boudoirs, Dens, and Smoking-Rooms

PURPOSELY, and because the contrast between them represents so many points of fundamental interest, a discussion of "Dens and Boudoirs," has, in this work, been made to follow directly upon that of "Salons and Drawing-Rooms."

For, as in salons the necessity exists for expressing only that which goes to making gracious and lovely the purely social side of human life—a life in which, however tempered, conventions and a rigorous regard for the amenities must still prevail, a man appearing always, as it were, in uniform,—so in dens and boudoirs one finds, clamouring as insistently for its own complete expression, that other deep-rooted instinct in man for relaxation and privacy. It is an instinct as old as the race itself, demanding periodic opportunities for throwing off restraints, and allowing the individual to become what he likes to call himself. An unattractive self, in many cases, as some of the dens he has provided prove. But sometimes a most engaging one, in

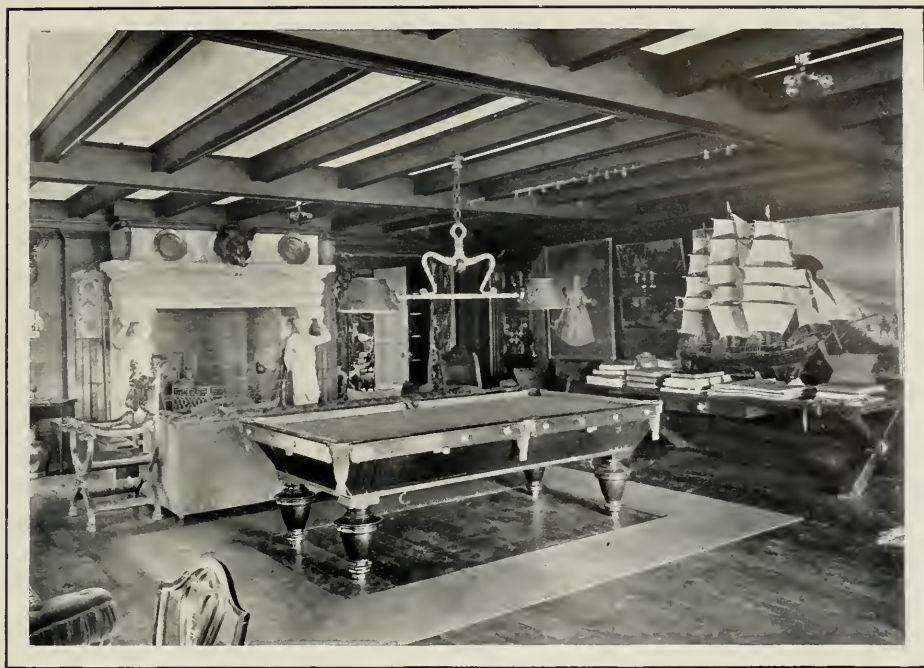


which unsuspected and alluring qualities are suddenly revealed.

The critic at first would seem to have but little business here, since this is a domain in which no questions growing out of the relations of a host to his guests need be considered, a man being at liberty to do as he chooses—even to violating certain laws of good taste, as when he insists upon dressing-gowns and slippers at night. And yet the critic finds in dens and boudoirs every faculty suddenly aroused, discovering as he does that a man's idea of comfort when alone, shows the man as he is, without artifice or convention. He discovers, too, that this question of what is considered comfort is a very vital one, which cannot be ignored when final estimates are placed upon houses. For it is as subtle in its revelations of a man's taste and development as questions of what he considers humour—of that which he is willing to laugh at, or to repeat to his friends as "funny." A man's idea of comfort betrays the secrets of his early training, his habits of thought and sentiment being even more closely related to his mental make-up than to his physical idiosyncrasies. Yet this is a point too often ignored by both critic and decorator. "Yes, a beautiful house," said one of them not long since, referring to one in which respect for beauty had been paid at every turn; "but there is not a corner in it in which to be comfortable."

What this special speaker forgot was that ideas





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

Photographed by Baker, New York

SMOKING ROOM IN A PRIVATE HOUSE AT SOUTHAMPTON, LONG ISLAND



Photographed by Baker, New York

SMOKING ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF MR. HENRY SELIGMAN, NEW YORK







of comfort must differ as the colours of sea and sky. Some men cannot be comfortable except when properly attired. Some women are uncomfortable unless the eye is satisfied. Lounging *en deshabille* does not make the comfort of every individual, as it does that of this particular decorator, since there are people able to be comfortable even in the midst of elegance! It is all a question of individual requirements—of character and equipment. To criticise a house as uncomfortable, simply because it is correct in its appointments, is absurd. Comfort includes a whole gamut of sensations and emotions, out of which the intellectual or æsthetic note can never be omitted. Bad colours and proportions make as much discomfort for some as ill-regulated temperatures do for others; and although one may find comfort in throwing off all restraints and lapsing into the primitive, another may find it only when the finer requirements of a cultivated taste have been gratified. Mentality, I repeat, must enter into the question, the satisfaction of a certain inner sense demanding as much for the eye as for the spinal column.

Whatever may have been the case in older civilisations, among us, at least, men, curiously enough, have been the first to make interesting and attractive those special rooms in a house, set aside for their exclusive use and recreation. Sometimes called dens, and sometimes called studies, studios, or smoking-rooms, their apartments have been places to which old and



young have been irresistibly drawn, until the distracted possessor has often been ousted from his territory. Invasions of the father's special domain, indeed, by every member of a household, and this in spite of his exclusion laws, belong to the history of all families. No place in a house is found so reposeful, so conducive to quiet trains of thought, so stimulating to the young imagination, the very evidences of his toil but adding to the general charm. For in creating something which stands for the real in him, he has created something as stable and inspiring as character itself, and been the first to solve, in dens at least, the secret of all successful interiors—that of a definite aim, and the subordination to it of every irrelevant detail.

It is, on the other hand, only with the building of our newer and more important houses that women have been discovered launching out for themselves, as it were, and providing their own special substitutes for the masculine den. In this they have been inspired possibly by the traditions of a more sumptuous European school, or possibly by a desire to indulge, to the utmost, that which in these modern days is sometimes referred to as "her craving for identity." Hitherto, at any rate, the mother's ample bedroom served her purpose. In this she wrote her letters, disciplined her children, or received the confidences of her intimate friends. But to-day we are beginning to find her with something considered exclusively her own. "Here





T. Henry Randall, Architect

SMOKING ROOM IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. H. W. POOR AT TUXEDO, NEW YORK







I have only the books I count as my friends," she will tell you pointing to row upon row of books lining the walls of her sanctum. Or, "Here at least I can keep about me the pictures of those I love," she will say as she points out among her flowers groups of various portraits.

And yet, odd as it may seem, most of these rooms so provided lack conviction. Despite their richness of brocade and satin, their luxury of lace and ermine, despite the very insistence made by special bindings in tooled leather, they rarely win you to them; nor do they always seem to win their veritable owners. You feel that the woman herself is not all here, that she has conceded too much to effects, sacrificed too much to convention. The foreigner sometimes sees this. A modern French writer, at any rate, gives this illuminating anecdote. After describing the various and superb possessions found in one house famed throughout the country—the Beauvais tapestries and the carvings; the bronzes and the portraits; the suites of bedrooms and bathrooms; the royal provision made everywhere for man and beast,—he finds himself at last in the sanctum of Madame. "A symphony in green," he says; "furs on the floor, busts on the pedestals." A glance at the book-shelves reveals to him the names of Flaubert, Renan, Mirabeau, De Musset, Maeterlinck, Byron, Taine, Molière, D'Annunzio, and Montaigne. Although millions and millions more of dollars, as he assures us, are still in her



pretty hands to expend as she chooses, he closes his chapter with these significant words: "In walking through the grounds, she led me to a small log cabin in the woods, where solitude was complete, and turning to me, said: 'Here I come every day to write; here alone am I happy.' "

Now and then, however, one does come across a woman's private room, in which the mistress *is* happy; and not only she, but all who enter. Thus there is one, found also in a country house. All the woodwork is white. The wall-covering visible above the low white bookcases is a cream-white, striped satin of softest tone, held in place by a dull gold braid. Lovely water-colours and pastels are hung there, each with a value of its own—an artistic, not a sentimental value. The low Louis Sixteenth chairs are covered with a soft cream velvet. The windows, like all others in the house, are leaded. Over them hang cream taffeta curtains, the old blue embroidery of the border being repeated in the fitted lambrequin. Drawn close up by the book-shelves, bringing the volumes within easy reach of her hands, is a genuine old *chaise longue* covered with a blue brocade that time has softened into misty tones.

You cannot enter this room, even when empty, without recognising that the inner temple of its owner's soul must somehow be a lovely place in which you yourself would like to dwell and find your re-creation. You recognise, too, that although individuality has



been allowed its free expression here, it has been the expression of the well-poised nature, sure of itself—a nature that, knowing its own necessities, has in providing for them wasted none of its energies in mere protest. There comes to you the same sense of conviction that you find in the refuges of men, although the charm of the purely feminine note is all-pervading here. And because the room convinces you, it draws you irresistibly to it.

This same drawing power is felt in another boudoir, this time in a city house. The woodwork is white and the walls are covered with a pink paper bordered with garlands. Pink satin curtains hang at the windows. Real lace cushions are piled on the satin-covered divan. The furniture is in marquetry. Books lie on the tables, photographs in silver frames cover the mantel. The desk is always thickly covered with letters from every part of the globe. What makes the room remarkable, however, is the fact that it belongs to a white-haired woman, a many-times grandmother, in fact, who has never lost her sense of dainty freshness. It might be the boudoir of some young girl. Yet to this room every day come old and young alike, sons with their cigarettes, girls with their secrets, distinguished men with interesting problems to discuss. For here again one finds suggested the well-defined purposes of the perfectly poised. It is the room of a woman to whom relaxation and privacy mean not opportunities for lapsing into the bizarre or eccentric,



but for more completely developing both cultivated and captivating qualities.

Luxury prevails in most of these rooms, even in those that are found not all-satisfying to their owners. Brocades, damasks, and satins form the covering of both walls and furniture. Real lace appears in cushions and curtains. Gold and silver, tortoise shell and ivory, rare carvings and embroideries, rich furs and porcelains, are everywhere. No one special period prevails. Now and then one finds a boudoir with its *boiserie* copied from Versailles. Or again whole rooms bought out of ancient palaces and set up here. Sometimes an English room is copied with its oak and chintz, its rows of miniatures, and its polished grates. Sombre furniture-covering and curtains combined with dark woods are found among those who wish to throw into stronger relief both books and canvases, for the true picture-lover keeps her best possessions for this room. There are still other rooms in which a different note is sounded. There is one, for example, in which the sympathy of the owner inclines her to Gothic forms. Thus, her bookcases and window are copies of famous Gothic carvings, painted white. With these, as colours, she combines, however, only the softest sea-shell pinks. They appear in the wall-covering and curtains, and again in the chairs and sofas—chairs and sofas into which one sinks as into pleasant dreams. White bear-skins cover the floor. Orchids, and orchids alone, appear in the crystal vases.





Carrère & Hastings, Architects

STUDY IN A PRIVATE HOUSE AT BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Photographed by Baker, New York







Like those who attire themselves for church, the mistress of this room never enters it unless she is clothed in garments of diaphanous white.

But why should you laugh?

Even so grave a necessity, imposed upon herself, is not altogether folly. For certainly there should be some sort of harmony preserved between a woman's dress and her surroundings, especially in those surroundings with which she has closely identified herself. Moreover I doubt very much if any real house lover altogether neglects it.

One knows that there are women who will not wear colours that cry out against those of their salons. And certainly one can hardly picture the stiff, starched waist and the short golf skirt as "the simple habit" in which a woman lives whose lounging room is made up of fluffs of lace and puffs of satin. One must consider the relation of toilets to environment. This does not mean that because a house is strictly Louis Quinze or Renaissance, a woman should dress after the fashion of those times. But it ought to mean that certain right relationships should be preserved. We insist upon these relationships when the surroundings are meagre, and the dress extravagant; for then, not only the woman's taste but her morals as well would be called into question. But when in the choice of her garments the requirements of a more sumptuous *entourage* are brought into play, we exclaim against eccentricity, extravagance, and vanity. The over-



accentuation of any relationship is of course absurd; at the same time, one should be suggested, between the woman and the house in which she dwells. Her way of dressing is but one way of conveying this to you. Look about in the houses of your friends, and you will find that this relationship is everywhere struggling for expression. You will find some woman though perhaps unconsciously, taking on the colour of a sympathetic environment, even one into which she has been introduced by marriage. You will see it in the graceful lines of dresses which she has chosen for her marble halls, in the colours she adopts, and sometimes even in the way of arranging her hair, copied maybe from the old prints that she has studied. All this goes on until at last the house though acquired seems suddenly to have become a setting for her. This, however, is a result that is never obtained, unless it has been accomplished without the exercise of vanity, the assumption of a pose, or too strong an insistence upon the rights of a rebellious personality.

No such subtlety of relationship can of necessity be found among men, bound by the laws of convention to habits of cloth and starched linen. Pictorially, indeed, a man never bears any relation to his surroundings, unless he goes off as a hunter, and settles himself in a camp. And perhaps this is the secret of how the balances are best preserved between the master and mistress, he being always, when in her presence, part, as it were, of an admiring audience. That he wears



of his rôle at times is suggested by the fact that he shirks it so often, going off into corners to build for himself a hiding-place. He demands one at least, almost with his first breath as a separate householder. He wants a place of his own, even when he has none of the excuses of the serious worker. To find it he will sometimes go off to the top of the house, protecting himself from approaches by private flights of steps, made beautiful, in many cases, by carved stone or wrought iron, and lighted by old brass or silver lamps. Or he gets off in a wing of the house, well shut away from the rest of the dwelling, still providing himself with special flights of steps, leading down this time into his domain. He never neglects his approaches, indeed. In this he differs widely from the woman. One is tempted, in fact, to believe that the inherited instincts of primitive man, guarding approaches to his cave, are being exercised again. For even when there is no separate staircase, there is always the well-protected entrance. One man, for instance, having built his refuge out-of-doors, has concealed approaches to it by clumps of skilfully arranged bushes and shrubs. A trellis protects you from the rain, but you must first know the secret before you can enter.

In this room there is, of course, the wide fireplace for the generous log, for the den-lover scorns the polished grate and well-washed lump of kennel coal. The ceiling is raftered. Hanging from it by invisible wires is a flight of wild geese. Various other



evidences of a huntsman's taste appear upon the walls. One end of the room, however, is reserved for pictures. Here he hangs, now a Van Dyck, and now, some weeks later, a Millais. No creature comfort is neglected. There are wide divans for lounging, chairs to be lost in, books that invite you. There are musical instruments, too, and once a week a famous quartet is summoned here. It is the refuge of a man who finds his recreation in cementing human ties, and in indulging the requirements of a many-sided nature. Before the public he is a director of men. Here he is discovered to be the genial friend and cultivated gentleman.

The privileged few alone are admitted to another refuge, in strange contrast to this. It is one which a well-known man of letters has provided for himself. As though it were not enough to have hidden the room itself, he has provided still a second staircase leading out of one room and up into another. This staircase, with its balcony, carved balustrade, and supporting columns, becomes a most decorative feature. It serves, however, to conceal from the room below an upper den made to hold some choicest treasures in illuminated text or ancient folio, and even the man himself when writing. The only furniture of this upper chamber consists of a bare oak table, two chairs, and a quaint lamp. The atmosphere is as rare and fine as that of some old mediæval cloister. One breathes books and quiet everywhere, the



eye being occasionally beguiled by a bit of bronze or a bust.

Quite a different atmosphere is felt in the room of another man who, in the wing of his house, has built at the head of a beautifully ornamented staircase a lofty raftered chamber, with a wide stone fireplace. Here he has hangings from every part of Europe, full-length portraits of men and women, chairs in which bishops have sat in council, rugs on which houris have danced, divans on which they have undoubtedly reclined, tables for cards, tables for tobacco, platforms to be drawn out for plays, pianos to be drawn in for songs. It is all frankly pleasure-loving, laughter-loving, fun-loving, like the man himself, who, when the cares of the day are thrown off, finds the drawing-room irksome.

The man of simple tastes and habits of reserve would of course be wretched in an environment like this. One finds him, therefore, surrounding himself with all that makes for quiet and repose. Thus, there is one room in which there is only one seat provided besides that at which the man sits before his table. It is a very beautiful room. Its walls and ceiling are of old carved Flemish oak. No *objets* or pictures are allowed to distract him from the beauty of his woods. Even his books are hidden behind secret panels opening with secret springs. Over the fireplace there is a wonderful old ormolu clock. But that is all. His writing materials are spread out on a carved oak



table. The only modern appointment visible is the inevitable telephone; even the chairs and their covers date back several centuries.

Now and then one finds the same simplicity and reserve even among young men to whom the fascinations of college souvenirs present no allurements when furnishing. One of the best examples I know is found in a city house. To within a couple of feet of the ceiling this room is lined with books behind glass, the cases being made of genuine old Dutch wood, carved columns separating the various compartments. From the wooden ceiling the bookcases are divided by a dull gold frieze throwing into relief busts of great writers. The fireplace is finished in old blue Dutch tiles. Nothing could be more severe and self-restrained, and yet nothing is cold. The red leather-covered chairs and sofas invite you, the books laid out on the bare oak tables, the peace and the certainty of it all. You want to linger there, as sometimes you are impelled to rest beside a person whose good breeding and self-control are like oases in wild desert tracts of a blistering social unrest.

A most interesting example of another room belonging exclusively to young men is found in a country house. To find it, one must descend below the dining-room floor. No kitchens being on this level, the descent is delightful. This room is finished in dull oak shingles, each shingle still showing the axe mark. The brick floor is covered with skins; a wide divan



filling one end of the room is covered with a leopard skin, as are the cushions scattered over it. The wide stone fireplace runs up to the raftered ceiling. Pipes are laid out on the tables. Pewter drinking-cups and tankards are set out for instant use, or arranged on a shelf running around the room, just above the sporting prints. To add to the charm of the room, there opens from it a stone courtyard, protected by a coping, ensuring not only a sense of privacy, but protecting one from a sharp declivity. Enchanting views of miles and miles of lovely country are seen from this courtyard, which suggests old monastery gardens, like those which monks find lovely on warm summer days.

Many fancies prevail in the creation of smoking-rooms. A Dutch room is sometimes copied, with its benches of wood set straight against the panels, its quaint windows and bare tables. Sometimes the Chinese element prevails and only their bronzes and porcelains are visible. Some men insist upon the billiard table. Others display their hunting trophies. Now and then a man is satisfied only with the beautiful. He will smoke only among his flowers, or in what he calls his conservatory. Quite another taste is displayed in a smoking-room of marble, finished with a mosaic ceiling of exceptional loveliness. Marble columns support the doorways. Against one wall there is an Italian fountain, its basin filled with water plants. A marble alcove, domed by Sicilian mosaics,



is set out with crimson cushions. Crimson appears again in the old cathedral chairs placed about the room. Furs lie on the floor. It is a room, of course, only for the after-dinner cigar, and never for the lounge.



## Chapter VI

### Libraries

WE have, perhaps, more libraries to the square inch than any other country in Christendom. No man, acquiring money enough to build a house boasting any pretensions, would dare to omit the library, so called. The women of his household would not permit it. For the women of our country have been educated from infancy into a perception at least of the imposing quality of a book, and of what it must stand for in the way of mental and social equipment. This education, begun in the nursery, is carried on everywhere. Our magazines and periodicals, scattered broadcast throughout the land, and found in our humblest dwellings, begin by awakening certain intellectual appreciations which our public schools and colleges go on developing. The wide-spread influence of these periodicals, all with serious purposes, all bent on instructing and elevating, instilling a reverence for literature and an interest in the habits and customs of authors, marks one of the striking



differences existing between the intellectual machinery designed for the cultivation of ideals in our own country and that of older civilisations.

I do not know how it may be in Germany, but in France, certainly, one finds no periodic literature corresponding to ours. One never sees, as among us, books and periodicals on the tables and shelves of the farming population, nor yet in the houses of the small village proprietors. Nor could any stretch of the imagination picture a French peasant girl or small shop-keeper's daughter poring over the pages of a woman's magazine, attempting to change her ideals of thought, in obedience to intellectual or æsthetic examples provided for her benefit. Her father has, of course, the Paris paper with its *feuilleton*, but the women themselves are too closely bound by tradition to be influenced by descriptions of new schemes in library decoration, or the forming of reading clubs, even were such descriptions given, which they are not. Her aspirations do not tend toward an intellectual development, neither does she understand anything about the prestige of a book—even of a book which lies idle on a shelf!

With us the case is different. The mental cravings of our remotest country dwellers are fed and nurtured by a host of periodicals in which the very book-shelf itself is portrayed as an integral part of the home. It is shown as set up in the play-room. The young schoolgirl is taught how to decorate it. The college





McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

LIBRARY AT "HILLSTEAD," THE RESIDENCE OF MR. ALFRED A. POPE, FARMINGTON, CONN.

Photograph by Baker, New York







student is supplied with special designs for its manufacture and trimming, her own efforts being reproduced in the pages of different household publications. What more natural, then, than that she should carry into her own home, when she has one, an appreciation at least of the necessity of shelves? or that she should look forward to designating one room in the house as a library?

One other idea entices her in her relations to books—that of their convenience for covering walls. For magazine writers have taught her, what others have long known—that the decorative value of mere book-covers has few parallels. The colours of the bindings, the solidity of rank and file, the constant play of light upon the lettering, the delicacy of minute shadowings, the variety of the upright line combined with a certain regularity, the relief of the horizontal shelf, create in their various combinations surfaces which to some are as alluring as tapestries. She has been taught all this, instructed even into the sense that books should be regarded as friends, with their faces always turned in welcoming fashion toward her. She has, in fact, been taught too much and too little. Thus, though she may have begun with some appreciation for books, she loses herself altogether at last in the allurements of certain ornamental possibilities provided by the shelf. We find her top shelf, for instance, covered with a display of the conglomerate, a distracting collection of pictures and vases, flowers and knick-

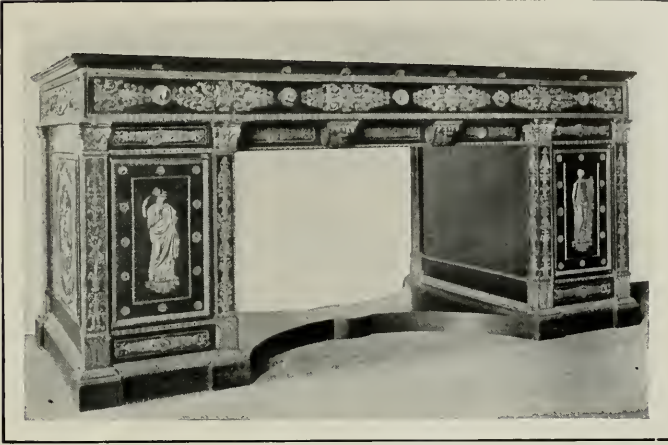


knacks, odd bits of silk looped up at the corners, pieces of plaster which she herself has bronzed. Or we discover her books in elaborately carved cases, the doors of which are locked in summer, the key mislaid, and forgotten when winter comes! Or even in more sumptuous houses we come upon barricades before the bookcase doors, barricades of pottery or bronze so heavy that no one but a man servant could remove them, in a moment of need; and this, too, in houses where pride is placed upon limited editions. Yet she goes on calling the room a library, though the tables are covered with plants and flowers with never a space for a reading-lamp nor thought of a chair drawn up within reach of its rays. Still a library, though family workbags hang on the rockers, though afternoon tea is served here, and nothing but a paper is perused in the room.

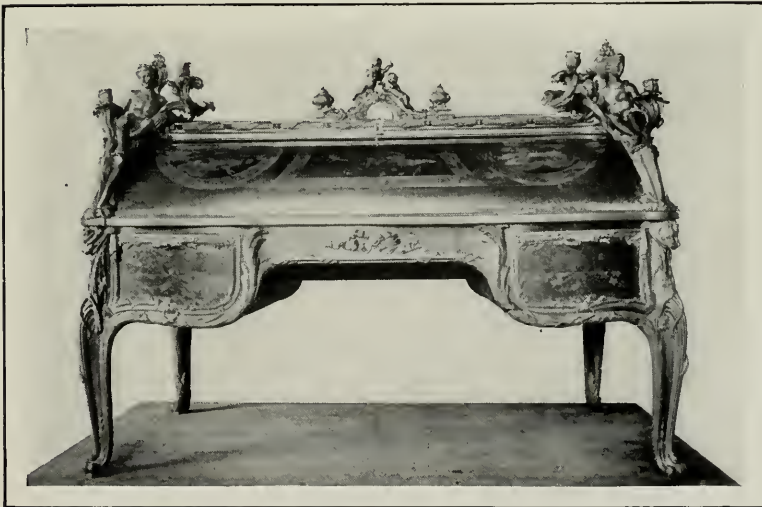
To suppose that evidences of family life have no right of existence in libraries would be folly. These evidences make part of their charm, but they must be evidences which do not imply the inroads of conflicting tastes, the usurpation of a territory consecrated to special purposes. Some sign, it would seem, should exist of books being at least occasionally read.

Unless a library possesses distinction, it fails of its great compelling note. This, of course, may be said of every part of a house, as it must necessarily be said of all finished productions, even a man's





LARGE MAHOGANY WRITING-TABLE ORNAMENTED IN BRONZE  
SUPPOSED TO HAVE BELONGED TO TALLEYRAND



WRITING-DESK OF ROSEWOOD MADE FOR LOUIS XV







manner not being exempt from the crucial test. Wherever too strong an insistence has been placed upon the purely decorative, distinction disappears,—from a library most of all. Some of the most impressive examples found among us are those in which neither the architect nor the decorator has been called upon to play important rôles. Old-fashioned libraries belonging to men of letters, though they have not boasted so much as a raftered ceiling, have had a beauty and compelling dignity about them unrivalled by many of the more superb creations of to-day, however elaborate the imported chimneypiece or costly the cases. One breathed books in those old places, and the breath of the books was the breath of the man. How delightful it all was, how reposeful, and what an honour one felt it to be admitted to the sanctuary.

I remember such a library, belonging to a poet and a diplomat. The well-filled shelves ran up to the ceiling and over the tops of the doors, down the backs of the doors in some instances—every available space having been pressed into service. More books lay on the tables; and newer purchases were piled in the corners. Stillness reigned. The faint enticing odour of old calfskin filled the room. Deep easy chairs were drawn up by a fire with ashes so thick that the coals of last night's blaze would be blinking in the morning, like the inextinguishable sparks of the poet's own flame. No bric-a-brac appeared, and the busts that were there were the busts of great thinkers.



Then the man himself, a very part of the atmosphere he inhaled. You never thought of the colour of his curtains, nor what kind of a rug the sunlight was playing over on the floor. You thought of his kingly head, his luminous eyes, of the delicacy of his hands as he took down a book and turned over a leaf for you. And then you forgot everything in what he was saying; in what he had to tell you of this book and that; in what, if you were favoured, he would sometimes read you from a brother poet.

Imagine this man in a room with his bookcases locked, barricades of pottery before the shelves, or a billiard-table adorning one end of the chamber!

To contend that the distinction which this man's library possessed was dependent on its meagreness in decorative detail, would be as stupid as to declare simplicity impossible with wealth.

Distinction, wherever it may be found, springs from an air of authority, the authority of taste, of knowledge, of cultivation and breeding and the sureness of a touch that is tempered by experience. It is not dependent on externals: it controls externals and uses them. A man therefore who puts up a Venetian ceiling in his library, and fills the room with Renaissance furniture, may create an atmosphere as full of distinction as that created by the man who leaves his plaster to be stained by smoke, or his books where dust can reach them. Distinction is no more present in one environment than in another. It is





LIBRARY IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. H. W. POOR, TUXEDO, NEW YORK.







present in the man, in his method of employing his medium; and interiors, though this is not always remembered, are as subtle mediums of expression, in some hands, as the painter's pigments themselves.

In one library that I call to mind, where the architect, on the other hand, has been employed to do some of his most important work, the one prevailing note is that of distinction. The library itself overlooks a city square where magnolias blossom in the spring, and flowers under arching trees bloom all the summer through. To one who enters here, the quiet stretches of the square and the sky beyond seem suddenly and somehow to belong rightfully to libraries, so great is the sense of repose and refreshment they inspire. It is an outlook, however, not often possible in town, where the walls of adjoining houses press close against rear windows, or stretches of asphalt and cobblestones make the only foreground in front, and where curtains, ground glass, or anything else must be resorted to, that will shut out the view.

Two great carved stone fireplaces are found at either end of this library. The ceiling is panelled and carved as are the doors. Books run straight up to the cornice. The room being lofty and of magnificent proportions, access to the books is had by a delicately wrought iron stairway leading to a balcony running round the room and following the line of the cases. The books themselves are protected by grills. Rugs cover the floor. Ample sofas are drawn up to the fires. Deep



easy chairs are placed near reading-lamps. Peace and plenty prevail, beauty and quiet are everywhere, though old and young read here, and stimulating talk is heard.

The tables in this room are of old oak, polished by three centuries of use; long tables, generous in their proportions and capable of holding huge volumes. They are tables that invite you, tables that are made to use, and on the spur of the moment, too, without feeling that you must first upset some cherished arrangement of the hostess, in the way of flowers and family photographs. Tables like these belong to libraries, though even when found their purposes seem too often forgotten. I came across one library table, the other day, over which an elaborately embroidered and fringed silk cover had been hung. The owner, having evidently been instructed in the value of folds, had thought proper to wrinkle this cover into a dozen of them, each fold being held in its place by a book! To have ventured to pick up a volume would have meant to bring the whole arrangement down about one's feet. But what a flashlight it threw on the intellectual propensities of the family. And how it gave the lie to the boast of the shelves.

Table covers, falling to the ground, have no place in libraries. Flat mats may be used, but never when they are in danger of slipping and sliding. The table cover, however, is a snare in which the ambitions of the inexperienced are apt to become entangled; it





From a Photograph by Hall

COLONY CLUB—READING-ROOM







embodies a temptation too great to be resisted, among those who perhaps have picked up a piece of old brocade or damask, and feel the need of it now to soften what is sometimes called a line. The lines of a beautiful table ought never to be concealed. They represent the work of distinguished designers, who have laboured as earnestly to produce the beautiful in furniture as the architect himself has worked in the creation of the room. If the table is so ugly that it ought to be concealed, it should never have been purchased—certainly not for a library. And yet, I could name libraries representing great wealth and embodying much pride, in which these table covers appear, long enough to touch the ground, and sometimes to be stumbled over.

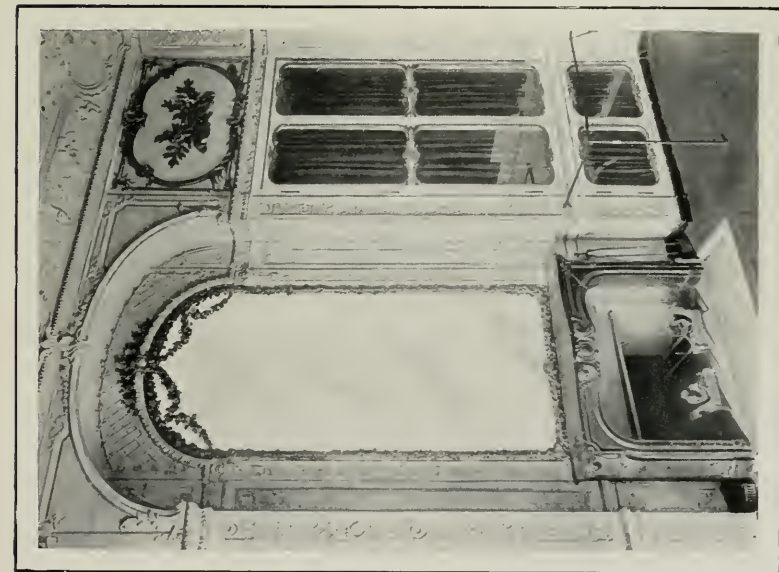
Old and young read in another room of simpler appointments, yet one in which there is the same compelling note of distinction. The doors and woodwork are of oak finished with delicately turned mouldings. The bookcases run just to the level of a tall man's elbow. The walls show the deep red of some fine old brocatelle. There is no frieze, but there is a cornice of oak, so beautiful in its proportions and fine reserve, that the eye, lifted from the page, finds in it perpetual repose. The wide chimneypiece is of black marble, showing grains of yellow. Over it is placed a bronze of Dante. No other "ornaments" deface it. The oak table is wide, and unencumbered with a cloth. A bowl of fresh roses always stands on it, but without



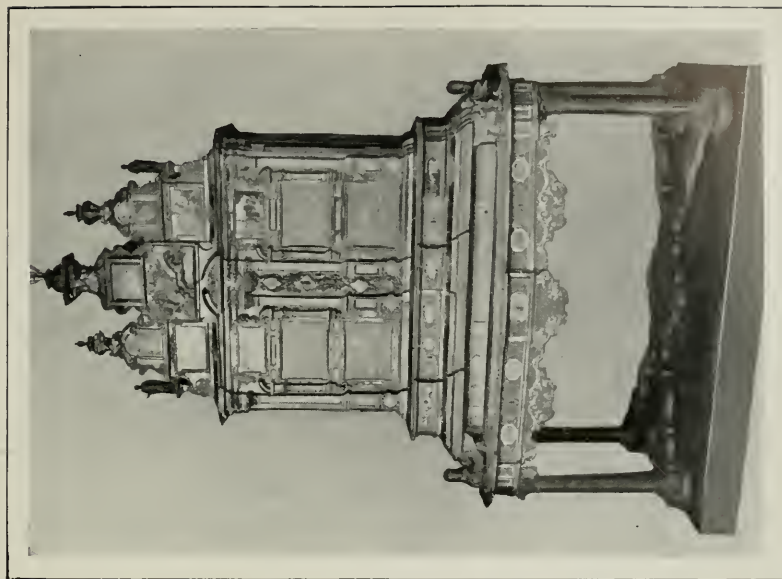
interfering with the books. The pictures above the shelves are grouped, not scattered, wide stretches of wall-space being left unencumbered, enhancing the impression of quiet dignity. In the deep, ample chairs the young son reads, and the daughters, still at school, pore over their books. You know at once that no pretences exist here, and that even special and expensive bindings do not place the volumes that they cover out of reach of youthful fingers.

The child in the library is a picture over which the imagination loves to dwell, and the library in which little ones are permitted to browse is one that satisfies something more than the histrionic or the sentimental sense. Certain certified values are stamped with their presence. You know what books must really mean to the family, what they will always continue to mean to the child of the house, not as mere acquisitions or "properties," but as part and habit of a daily thought, out of which still other libraries will go on being formed. But it must not be the library in which playthings take the place of books, a room that represents the overflow of the nursery. There must be the preservation of certain dignities, and this obligation respected there can never be the desecration so frequently seen, in the intrusion and obtrusion of alien elements representing lucky finds or beribboned purchases. Without dignity the feeling of the library is destroyed. Dignity, however, is a much abused term, frequently met with in periodicals





WOODWORK IN THE LIBRARY OF THE DAUPHIN, SON OF  
LOUIS XV, IN THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES



CABINET IN THE CLUNY MUSEUM, OF A CLASS HIGHLY  
PRIZED AS STORAGE-PLACES FOR OLD MANUSCRIPTS  
IN LIBRARIES







where it is applied to the stiff and the hard, even awkwardness being occasionally confused with it, as it sometimes is in the manner of a man assuming a pose to cover a deficiency. Dignity is like tenderness—an attribute of strength, and unafraid.

Dignity perishes absolutely in a library, however well designed, into which one allows oneself to introduce what are called “pretty things.” Over-decorated flower-pots have no business there—pots with crinkled paper-holders, kept in place by puffs of satin ribbon, or pots set in straw baskets, gilded and painted, the handles bedecked with more satin bows. Why should floral creations like these be permitted on library tables? And why should so great an abhorrence exist for the earthenware pot, which in reality has a certain value of its own, often supplying with its sober tones just the note of colour needed? The weakness for the fancy flower-pot, however, is one that assails even those in high places. I saw one, a cheap, ugly thing of silvered straw and containing a palm, set down at the foot of a marble staircase on a marble floor, and in a marble hall, too, with Spanish velvets hanging on the walls. And I have seen libraries of great beauty of design, their harmonies quite destroyed by the presence of a variety of these abominations, filling every available window and table space.

The preservation of these harmonies should be the earnest study of all owners of libraries, especially



of those to whom the problem is new, its solution not more or less an inherited instinct. Among such as these, the question of colour should present itself as one of supreme importance, no colour being chosen until it has been studied by night and by day. Shadows thrown by beams of sunlight entering through a window at noon will soften certain tones harassing to the eye when, with the evening, the curtains are drawn straight and the rays of the lamp fall directly upon them. Textiles, too, should be studied and those avoided having figures so pronounced as to rob a room of its quiet, becoming with their obtrusiveness as distracting as loud talking. All vivid contrasts should be shunned, all over-accentuations. Colour tones and their gradations should be felt like a sympathetic atmosphere, stealing over and enveloping you, not breaking into your mood as with clarion notes. Personal predilections may incline one to reds or greens, but the general impression should be uniform, preserving one key.

Deep-toned reds appear in most of our best and newest libraries. In one of stately proportions, this red is seen in the long stretches of East Indian carpet, specially woven for it and entirely covering the inlaid floor to within a few inches of the cases. It appears again in the old velvet of the walls, a marvellous old velvet in which the red seems to fall away, while the nap, as it takes up the light, has almost a vibrant quality, robbing the room of any sense of gloom.



Such a red on a flat surface would have absorbed the light and produced an impression of dullness. It would have made itself too strongly felt in a figured stuff. In this velvet it became kindly-tempered, like a haze.

The arched ceiling holds an old canvas painted a century or more ago and filled with superb allegorical figures in which the reds of royal robes predominate. The ceiling itself is supported by a coloured cornice and frieze carved in high relief. The bookcases of carved black oak are low, nothing but bronzes being permitted upon them. Carved black oak columns support the door and window openings, while delicately turned mouldings alone appear round the window frames. The over-doors are filled with charming tapestries framed in black oak. The huge carved stone fireplace is Renaissance, as are the tables, pure in style and genuine. The chairs are high-backed, the sofas low and alluring, their cushions covered with old tapestries, beautiful in tone. A fine respect for detail is everywhere apparent. Thus the reading-lamps are not modern inventions of commercial designers, adorned by lace and satin shades, but rare old pieces of bronze and porcelain into which electric bulbs have been skilfully introduced. It is a room in which all the resources of wealth have been brought into play, yet one in which the visitor feels the sure, discriminating touch of the man and woman with whom taste and knowledge have moved hand in hand.



You know at once that it was not furnished in a given time and then pronounced finished, but that it was allowed to grow, as such rooms should—growing, however, without deviating from well considered lines.

A grey-green, softened by dim yellowish tones, lends colour to another delightful library. The material is an old brocatelle, and appears on the walls above the high cases, and again in the curtains. Green, much lower in tone as it should be, covers the ample sofas drawn up by the fire. The old oak ceiling is panelled, as are the doors. The great chimneypiece is also of carved oak, old English in design, and runs to the ceiling. Broad windows finish two sides of the room, one opening on to a stretch of lovely country, the other on to a wide marble veranda, shaded by awnings in summer, and enclosed by glass and filled with plants in winter.

A yellow oak of beautiful grain enters into the construction of still another well-known library in a neighbouring town, a town with open squares and spaces, and room enough for trees and grass to grow before the houses. Trees, indeed, press close against the windows of this room, filling it with a sense of green coolness in summer, and enticing the eye in winter, by the beauty of bare branches against the sky. The walls are entirely covered with books, the cases running from the floor to the carved and panelled oak ceiling. The only space left anywhere for a picture is over the mantel, where a landscape, subdued





Photograph by Baker, New York

LIBRARY IN THE RESIDENCE OF MR. HENRY SELIGMAN, NEW YORK CITY







in tone, is set in the panel. The fireplace itself is low, and built of green tiles, rich in colour and blending charmingly with the yellow of the woods. Dark red velvet bound by a dull gold braid hangs at the windows. Dark red also covers the furniture. The carved oak cases are supported by enclosed cupboards, in which pamphlets are hidden. The tops of the cupboards form a shelf running round the room, and wide enough to hold odd volumes, a convenient arrangement and one that adds enormously to the comfort of a beautiful interior.

The white library is not without its votaries, the favourite model followed being that found at Versailles. In one instance where such a copy has been made, and the shelves filled with books in special bindings, the effect has been spoiled by the introduction of modern upholstered French furniture, with silk hangings of a palpable newness of design, drawing all attention to themselves, and leaving to the books but a secondary consideration. You forget the books, indeed, until you rouse yourself and determine to pay them some heed. In another instance, however, where this same model appears, the introduction of the modern note in textiles and furniture becomes altogether pardonable, so obvious is it that one has made the innovation for the sake of a congenial tone. A delicate green broken by white appears above the high cases, and forms a frieze. The same colour hangs at the windows and covers the chairs and sofas, the



material being a velvet with a silvery sheen. A darker green, unbroken by figures, overspreads the floor. The room is lovely, but not so lovely as to cause one to lose the sense of substantial books, or to miss its note of real distinction.



## Chapter VII

### Bedrooms, Bathrooms, and Dressing-rooms

AS one of my greatest disappointments connected with certain houses has lain in discovering, on a bedroom floor, that the imagination which ran riot in salons and dining-rooms had here become exhausted and fallen flat, the brass bedstead and conventional couch being all that was possible to those whose love of magnificence had led them into a display of tapestries and carvings in more conspicuous places below,—so, in other houses, it has been my keenest pleasure to find, on ascending carved or marble stairways, beauty still awaiting me, ready to accompany me wherever I wandered, even in and out of secret places, beguiling and refreshing me as I loitered or moved on.

And nowhere have I found this pleasure so poignant as in one particular dwelling-place where, from the very engine-room below ground, to the last detail in the servants' quarters, nothing has been overlooked or forgotten which could make for the truest or the best.



The bedrooms are a perpetual delight. To enter that of the mistress of the house, one passes through the deep, wide, white marble doorway of the square upper hall, hung with tapestries and lighted by a dome. Above this doorway, the marble of which is a repetition of that forming the balustrade, there is a beautiful over-door of charming design, framing a Tiepolo. The doors themselves are of old French oak—double doors, in fact,—their oblong panels so exquisitely carved in vines and flowers that connoisseurs from Europe come to see them. Two other duplicate sets of double doors are found inside; one opening into the dressing-room of the mistress, the other into the master's bathroom.

The room is of ample proportions, being some twenty-three by forty feet. It is entirely of the same old French oak as the doors, the oblong panels, of Louis the Sixteenth's day, being ornamented at their tops with single festoons of flowers of great grace and loveliness, showing the same marvellous carving. So delightful are the proportions everywhere in this room, so satisfying the door and window openings, the square of the panels being relieved by the rounded arch of the windows and over-mantel, so delightful is the tone of the wood, so exquisite every detail, that, even without its furniture, it has always had, for those who watched its slow completion, a dignity and repose all-compelling—a dignity and repose that have never been lost during that oftentimes destructive process of





McKim, Mead & White, Architects

Photograph by Baker

BEDROOM IN "HILLSTEAD," THE RESIDENCE OF MR. ALFRED A. POPE, FARMINGTON, CONN.

The formality of the pure Colonial is here unrelieved, even the fire-board being retained.  
Its coldness and severity are in marked contrast to some modern departures



McKim, Mead & White, Architects

BEDROOM IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. CLARENCE H. MACKAY AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND







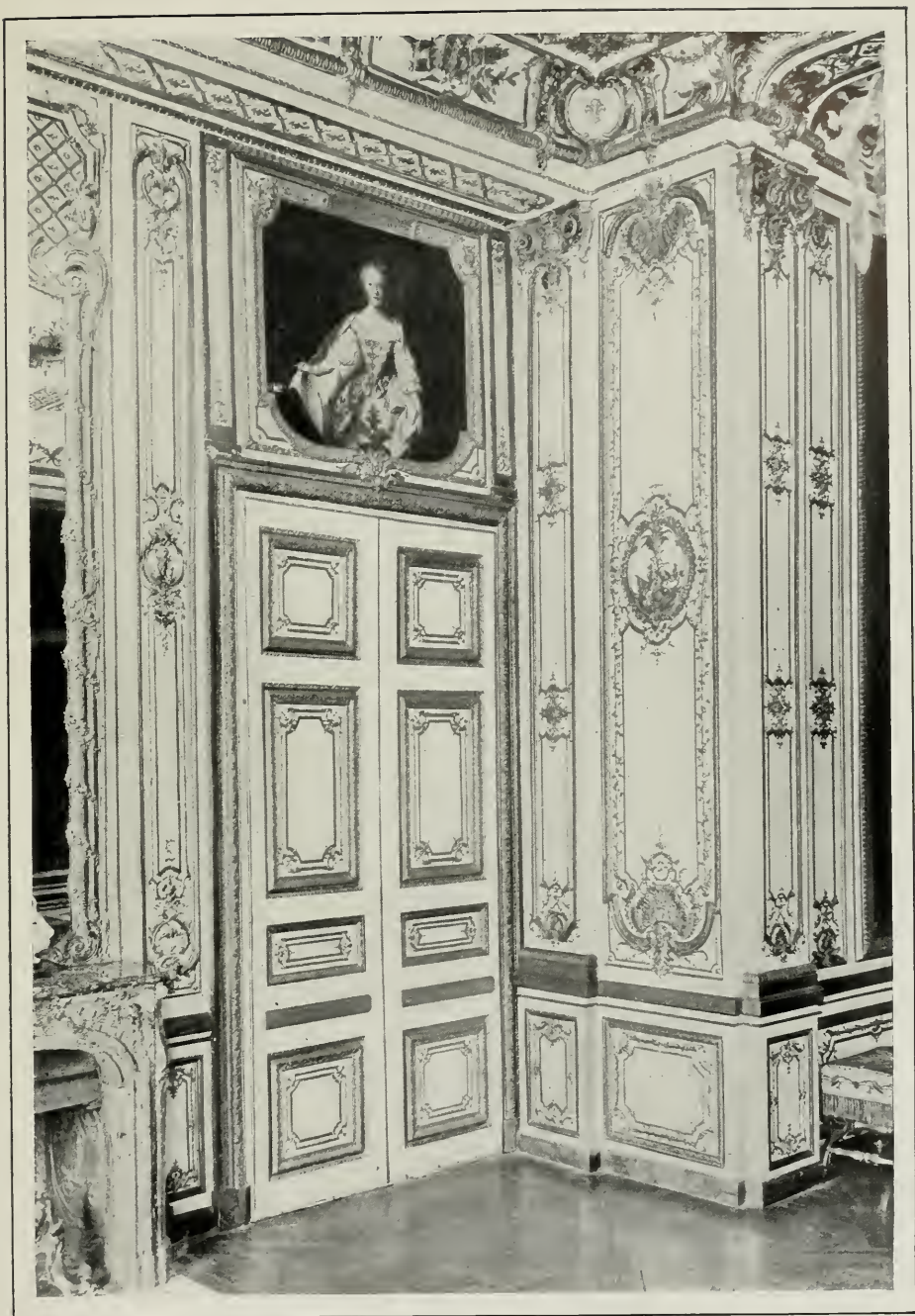
adding curtains and cushions. Now that the room is done, its beauty is but enhanced, like that of a beautiful woman who knows when and where to wear a regal robe. No odds and ends of little things appear; no pictures. Inharmonious colours do not jar, nor does one suffer the shock of discovering in a beautiful environment some cheap or inadequate textile. The inlaid floor is covered with a specially woven Savonnerie rug showing the old French blue-green of the period. This same carefully selected tone is seen in the thick curtains of grosgrain silk which are bordered with the velvet brocade of the bed hangings. The Louis Sixteenth sofas and chairs are covered with tapestry. Like the tables and commodes, this furniture has a well authenticated and historical value. The bed, standing on a dais, is gilt, and richly carved in high relief, showing wreaths of flowers falling from a basket, a design repeated in the framework of the chairs and sofas. From the gilded canopy hang the bed curtains of velvet brocade, the only copy ever made in France of that which covers the bed of Marie Antoinette now in the Louvre, and, like hers, lined with blue-green silk. This brocade also covers the bed. In it deep greens and dull golds, relieved by minor notes of red, are so marvellously blended in tone that one who studies the material experiences a positive thrill, as one sometimes will from flowers beautifully massed. The marble mantel is pure Louis Sixteenth, the over-mirror enclosed in a panel which



repeats the receding arch of the window openings. Every detail of the fireplace, from its gilt clock and candelabra to its *chenets* and shovel, like every other detail of appliqué and ornament found in the room, has been carefully studied. No copies have been substituted for originals.

Now beautiful and rich as are all the details, the charm of the whole would instantly vanish, as they do from so many interiors, were a single one of these details made so obtrusive as to be for a single moment out of the picture. One who enters gets atmosphere first, not the accentuation of prominent possessions. Personality is pre-eminent—that personality which, eliminating itself for the sake of the whole, ends by permeating the whole, becoming its dominating element. And it is only when this is done, that a house is really made to seem, as it were, a setting for its mistress, as a well-designed band of gold on the finger becomes a setting for a faultless pearl. Few people, especially among those found in sumptuous environments, ever seem to be so framed. They do not in reality belong to magnificent settings, even to those with which they have thought it desirable to surround themselves. Some are dominated by the sense of their own splendours. Some are always anxious, being ever on the alert for possible accidents or evidences of things out of place. Some are like wanderers, for ever missing the one note of self-elimination which would bring them into harmony.





CORNER IN BEDROOM OF LOUIS XV., AT VERSAILLES

The woodwork is carved and gilded







It is only now and then that one finds men and women like the mistress of this bedroom, to whom houses are like words—arbitrary symbols for conveying new meanings in old things, new aspects of time-worn truths, new graces and warmth, new revelations of love and life, and that perennial sustenance which beauty, well established, lends.

For the possessor of a bedroom such as this, to provide herself with a bathroom having damask-covered walls and lace-trimmed toilet tables (as some have done) would have been an impossibility. Therefore the bathroom which here adjoins the dressing-room is of marble; the great wide panels, divided by white columns, are of a sea-green marble broken by white, delicate as water sprays, and full of liquid tones, as cool and refreshing as water itself. Above these panels rises the rounded arch of the mosaic ceiling, from which, by silver chains, hangs an old silver church lantern, now holding an electric light. Over the marble basin hangs the mirror in an antique silver frame with beaten figures. The bath and the shower are approached by descending two marble steps, the platform being protected by a balustrade with delicately carved pilasters.

In contrast to this lovely example, I wish that I might describe some other bathrooms belonging to houses in which every law held to be appropriate here, has been broken; where artificial roses appear in decoration, where palms are set out in wicker pots,



## The House Dignified

stuffs cover the walls, and carpets are nailed to the floor; and this in bathrooms, too, where the extravagance of tubs and gilded faucets has been indulged to its limit. Even to hint at such seems like a violation of confidence, and yet it must be maintained again, that to have any value at all, a discussion of houses must be like that of any other work of so-called art—the critic on the lookout for excellence must run the risk of offending a feeling, loth as he may be to do so. And certainly, it would seem, there is no reason why the laws of good taste should not be as carefully preserved in bathrooms as in any other part of a house. We as a people, odd as it may seem, need now and then to have this truth impressed upon us. For, although our bathrooms are the pride of our country, the excellence of our plumbing a national boast against which we sometimes offset even the glories of old palaces, we have not yet learned much that the so-called tubless foreigner could teach us.

Up among the wild hills of the island of Majorca, I came across a bathroom. The walls were tiled. Cool green vines grew against the windows. The tub was of an ancient marble, stained and richly carved. The floor was bare except of furs. No hangings defaced the openings. No lace-trimmed toilet tables appeared. And who of us does not remember that other bathroom in the Pitti Palace, with its marble columns and mosaic, its beautiful lines and proportions, its observance everywhere of the fitness of





A CHIPPENDALE GUEST-ROOM

A cream and white stripe covers the walls. Gray-greens appear in the carpet and draperies







things? We who boast so much forget this fitness, go on ignoring it both in high and low places,—we who nail carpets to the floors of bathrooms, hang stuffs on the walls, and are sometimes even careless about the towels displayed, some tradition of an earlier domestic environment impelling us to a thoughtless choice of red or blue borders. It is only among the genuine lovers of fine detail that one finds towels as carefully considered in quality and design as the bed or table linen. Here lace like that bordering old church linens is found edging some, the lace being repeated at times as an insertion. The monograms, which in many instances are embroidered, are in others formed by drawing the thread of the linen itself, a new and difficult departure in the needle-work of to-day. Some of these towels are specially woven, and all are interesting in themselves.

To return, however, to bedrooms. There is one, the woodwork of which, having already become historical, has been brought bodily from the other side. The panelling is that of Louis Fifteenth's day, the stain a French grey. The over-doors are filled with tapestry. Tapestry, again, fills a wide panel forming the closet door, and appears once more in the furniture, one of its tones being taken up in the silk bed- and window-curtains. The bathroom connected with this room is of white marble, covered with a huge white polar-bear skin. Nothing else is permitted except the toilet table and chair.



## The House Dignified

Then there is another, set apart for young girls. This is in white. The twin beds have ring-doves sculptured on them. From the canopy, to match, are hung the curtains of silvery blue taffeta caught up by garlands of pink roses, and bordered by a band in which these roses are worked in miniature. The same border appears on the blue taffeta spread and on the window-curtains. The furniture repeats the fashion of the bed. It is a lovely room, which those who see go forth at once to copy, but which can never be reproduced by any who miss the secret of its proportions and its combinations of tones.

The bedrooms just described are found in town houses, but the same respect for detail and harmony is shown in certain of our country houses, where a marked departure has been made from the customs prevailing a quarter of a century ago. Then most of the furnishings represented outgrown articles from town, ousted because shabby or because the city house was being made over, the tufted red rep sofa being not infrequently seen, and even the gilt chairs and tables of commerce. Now, happily, the subject being more carefully studied, one finds, even in remote and out-of-the-way corners, lovely houses, centres of an ever-widening influence making for the beautiful and appropriate. And how delightful it is to enter some of these! One bedroom has its leaded windows opening on to a wide marble loggia overlooking a stretch of river and mountain country extending for



miles. The walls, of old English oak, are panelled in squares of charming proportions. These are finished by a cornice supporting an oak ceiling following in its design a Jacobean model. Pure Jacobean, too, are all the appointments of couch, chairs, and tables. Red, which is seldom interesting in bedrooms, is here felt to be an appropriate colour, appearing as it does in the mellowed tones of old silk damask hung about the four-post bedstead and covering the mattress, and again in the cushions of the quaint Jacobean couch. The same tone of red is seen in the velvet tester, heavily embroidered in gold.

In this room, too, one feels again that fine sense of individual reserve which so strongly distinguished the Louis Sixteenth bedroom to which reference has been made. A respect for environment has been shown—for the object itself and for its own fullest meaning. Without this respect all rooms must fail in commanding attention. It must be, though, a reserve which inspires confidence, and is exercised by those who, possessing many equipments, have mastered the secret of occasions as it were, the knowledge when to display and when to cease from displaying. The reserve of the unequipped and afraid of themselves is another affair, and generally betrays itself in an exhibition of the crude, the bare, and the awkward.

Although the bedrooms of master and mistress are for the most part separate in these days, they are almost always made to follow the same general fashion.



In this instance the master's room is also panelled in old oak. Here, however, the colours introduced are greys and grey-greens, shown in the frieze and ceiling, and in the coverings for the furniture. For colours, as they should be everywhere, are as carefully chosen in this particular house as the details of epochs themselves, which is why the effect is everywhere so satisfying. There are greys and greens, golds and blues, delicate mauves and pinks, found now in old velvets or silk, and now, their place being proper, in so simple a textile as the sateen of a window cushion, selected because of its ability to convey a certain impression. The result of it all is, that the sleeping-apartments inspire you not only with a sense of promised repose to the body, but with that rarer sense of an assured refreshment of mind, never possible in rooms that are overcrowded with stuffs or inharmonious in colour. To arrive at the desideratum one must know not only how to choose colours, but how and when and where to repeat them, how to blend and how to contrast them. One must be sensitive to pitch and key, never getting off them as one does sometimes who allows blue greens and yellow greens to appear side by side, not alone in a stuff, but where porcelains and stuffs are seen in juxtaposition. The keynote must be first struck. This may be given by the walls, or by some object of importance from which the rest of the room is to be built up. In one room, the bed itself strikes the note. It is an interesting example





T. Henry Randall, Architect

BEDROOM IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. HENRY W. POOR AT TUXEDO, NEW YORK

This is a small guest-room, adjoining a larger one, in which the blue of the bedstead is repeated in the gray-blue satin brocade of the walls; and the gold of the carved figures is repeated in the appliques and the mantel ornaments.







of old Italian, richly carved. The woodwork is a faded blue, the figures being gilded. This blue, then, is repeated in the old silk of the walls and in the blue of the carpet. The gold is repeated in the sconces and the marble ornaments.

The traditions of almost every foreign school have been followed in the bedrooms of the day. We find the Chinese influence as it affected the Europeans a century or more ago. We discover the Spanish with its rich velvets and gold, the Dutch with its carvings, the late and early English, and that which is known in our own country as the Colonial. With these latter we have some charming chintzes, although we often find the yellow damask of our more sumptuous early American houses. The furniture is not always genuine. One woman in town points laughingly to the rear windows of a Sixth Avenue flat, in which lives a man who makes the very finest Hepplewhite furniture, that is afterwards sold on a more pretentious avenue. The laugh is echoed everywhere, and rightly, it would seem, since the very elect are deceived. The wonder is that men should be so reluctant to confess to the possession of a copy. When the architect copies he does so frankly, and there is always his own individual touch to give his work distinction. Why not give as much credit to the furniture-maker? He, too, has his own talents to which honour is not sufficiently paid.

And just here it may be as well to touch upon one



other weakness of the day, that of always insisting upon the cost of things—ten thousand dollars for a bath-tub, fifty thousand for a chandelier, as though the price were a sort of guarantee of excellence. Excellence is not attained by extravagance. It depends upon a conscientious study of the subject, the ability to recognise special requirements and to fill them, the power of adapting necessities to environments. We are foolish to suppose and to insist that money alone makes possible the creation of the beautiful in houses, or the following of any special school. Money really has nothing to do with the subject, although those who lack the purchasing medium (and the taste) are apt to claim that it does. Too great an ability to buy leads as often to the over-indulgence of bad taste, as the inability to do so cramps the purchaser, confining him to substitutes. In making our judgments, we ought to get altogether away from the question of cost. The only legitimate stand possible when considering the power of money to direct and command in any art is this: that those who possess a sufficiency with which to build and embellish as they would, ought to be governed by a certain sense of responsibility in the matter. Study should be given to the subject, intelligence exercised, whimsical tastes subordinated, and a right appreciation of relative values cultivated. It should be remembered, too, that the expression of personality is one thing, the exercise of personal prerogatives quite another. The great and



much-abused women of France gave to the building and adorning of palaces and gardens a conscientious and intelligent study. Though they were guillotined afterward for the exercise of misunderstood talents then called extravagant, the objects for the creation of which they suffered a national odium are to-day proudly pointed to as among the greatest of public properties. These properties, moreover, are carefully protected by the government, which is glad to receive a revenue from them. History has its own revenges.

Connected with most of our important bedrooms are dressing-rooms following the fashion of the sleeping-apartment. The same woods are shown, the same panelling, the same detail of fireplace or window and door opening. So great a regard for closets has been displayed that it is sometimes amusing to watch the feminine visitor forgetting real beauties to exclaim over those practical things of which as a less fortunate person she has never been known to have enough. In these dressing-rooms, then, there are hat closets, sometimes two. A panel is sprung open, and from ceiling to floor hang hats of every kind and description, suspended from pegs of special design. Another panel opens, and shoes and slippers are revealed, no simple shoe-bag sufficing for the demands of the day. There must be a series of shelves, each with its row of slippers and shoes filled with their particular trees—a bewildering array of foot-gear, indeed, for afternoon, evening, and night, for ball and dinner dresses, for theatres,



opera, and tea, for sunshine and rain. Still other panels open, and we have the perfumes and powders, the pastes and ointments, the medicines and extra brushes. Behind other panels are the sliding drawers for blouses, laid out flat, for underclothes, and then again still others for the stockings, since each pair of shoes or slippers must be multiplied by three, or four times three, in hose. Then there must be the drawers for gloves—drawers and drawers for these; and almost as many for the handkerchiefs, tied up in dozens with the coloured satin ribbon which their owner affects. Then there must also be the closets for tea-gowns and those for street dresses, closets that run on indefinitely till the dressing-room is outgrown—cedar closets for furs, cedar closets for shawls, until one arrives at special rooms of ample proportions, provided for ball gowns.

There are closets, too, for the mistress's own bed linen, never to be confounded with that belonging to any other member of the household. For there are women who like to preserve individual fashions in bed. Sometimes this fashion includes a question of colour, sometimes one of a textile—black satin sheets not being unheard of. Generally, however, it is seen in an extravagance in laces and embroideries, the over-sheet, pillow-cases, and night-gowns being made in sets, from which studied composition even the necklace is not omitted.

Hand-spun linens are insisted upon, and real laces. Everything, too, must harmonise to minutest



details, bed-hangings and ribbons never being allowed to conflict in tone. A few years ago we laughed at the stories repeated. To-day we begin to see a reason for not neglecting that part of a woman's existence which represents a third of her appointed time. Besides, those who are inclined to carp need only to be reminded of what the beautiful Aurore of *The Grandissimes* felt it "her duty" to proclaim to her daughter: "The meanest wickedness a woman can do in all this bad, bad world is to look ugly in bed."

And the beautiful Aurore was right.



## Chapter VIII

### Windows and Doors

WINDOWS are both a public and a private property. Every passer-by has a right to them. As part of the façade, they go to the making not only of an architectural impression, but to the very quality and character of a communal environment. They challenge comment from lay and professional minds alike, and, of all parts of a house, afford to writers the most prolific source of similes. Thus one finds them compared to the eye, now scowling from under their fierce eyebrows of vines, now timidly peeping from under the half-lifted lid of a cornice, and now frankly gleaming with kindly intent and promise. Some, indeed, go even farther, declaring that the very soul of the inmate is visible at the panes, and that those who look can catch whatever spirit of consideration or acerbity reigns within.

None of these similes are as far-fetched as they might seem. Among the myriads of windows visible in every direction, the differences of expression are as manifold as those presented by the faces on a



crowded street. A cursory glance is sufficient to reveal to you mental attitudes as diametrically opposed as the poles themselves. You can recognise this in conventional twin houses standing side by side; and always in apartments, where the windows of separate floors, though exactly alike in feature, bear not the slightest resemblance to each other, in the way of individuality or character.

Most windows seen from the street affront you. They are like the slam of a door intended to shut you out. Attempts, to be sure, are sometimes made to soften the manner, as when costly laces are displayed in unbroken stretches against the panes, an accentuation of material resources which, though accomplishing a given purpose, does so by convincing you that, ample as is the command of ways and means, those of an individual equipment are as proportionately small. Now and then, however, even on our city streets, one does find windows that, like the well-bred person, have other means of self-protection besides the purely aggressive;—delightful windows, some of these, keeping you at respectful distance, yet charming you by their manner, luring you sometimes a block or two out of your way, in order to gain another glimpse of them.

Occasionally the architect succeeds in endowing his windows with charm. He never does it when he piles on ornament, overweights his cornice, or places his openings so regularly that he gives to a house the



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air of a barrack. As a human face in its infancy is sometimes compared to a series of little dots standing for eyes, nose, and mouth, variations of expression being attained by the mere distribution of these dots; so, if we still cling to the simile of the eye for the window, it will be seen that the architect, by his own distribution of windows, is able to give to any façade expressions as varied as those attained by a painter, who, by placing the eyes wide apart, for example, suggests candour and frankness, or by making them small and too near together, indicates meanness and cunning.

Quite apart, however, from anything which the architect has been able to accomplish, even by so well balanced a distribution of his openings that his façade, like a finely modelled face, unconsciously compels from every passer-by a recognition of its dignity and importance—quite apart, I say, from all this lies the work of the dweller within, who by the exercise of her own prerogatives may spoil his work when good, or dominate it when bad, as when a cheerful spirit looks so smilingly out from ungainly features that you are made to forget, or even to love them.

It is in her choice and arrangement of her draperies that the woman distinguishes herself, differentiating herself as it were from the crowd, and proving the possession of individual gifts. She needs to exercise many powers. She must learn to look at two sides of her subject, to study her windows, for example, both from within and without. This is her greatest stum-



bling-block. In general, if she gets the lights softened to a becoming tone indoors, the rest can go for naught. She rarely considers the effect from the pavement. If she did, would we encounter so often the purely conventional ugliness of so many windows? be jarred upon so frequently by the staring white of costly laces looking like plasters stuck regularly over a brown façade, or coming in too close juxtaposition with the grey of rough stone? For these are the things that one sees in many of the so-called palaces of to-day, and which go to prove at least an arid fancy.

Sometimes, instead of these flat stretches of lace, we find that which is even worse—curtains that from the sidewalk look like flounces of a lady's petticoat, an ugly fashion copied from that of French dress-makers, and unthinkingly applied here by those whose studies, when abroad, have been confined to the shops.

In large towns we are no longer guilty of the painted shades, but we are far too prone to shades of every colour ranging from bright mustard yellows to impossible greens. Nothing is so ugly from the street, presenting as they do flat surfaces of discordant tones. If they were used only at night, there would be no cause to complain, but almost everywhere one sees them half drawn in the daytime.

From the inside of the house, one is apt, again, to leave out of consideration the problem of one's special outlook, an ugly or a pleasant view, a colour that clashes, as from a brick wall, across the way, or a



colour that softens, as from a tree. In many houses where the windows of an L come up against a neighbour's rear apartments, the transparent curtain, though sufficient to protect those within a room, will do nothing on the other hand, to shut out the unpleasantness beyond. I know of one instance where a lovely dining-room has been quite spoiled by a window drapery so thin that the opposite fire-escape, with its inevitable litter of prohibited things, is made to seem part of the interior, so intimately is every detail brought to those about the table. In this case plate glass has been used, perhaps for the sake of more light, although the panes of the china closets, with which the window is balanced, are small. This plate glass not only destroys the harmony of the room, but over-accentuates the presence of objectionable kitchen paraphernalia. The same fault is encountered in many houses, a fault that might be so readily overcome by the use of a leaded or a smaller pane, or by the choice of a textile. For the windows against which these objections lie are not those of ready-made houses, where all a woman's ingenuity must be exercised in order to conceal the palpable shortcomings, but of houses of wealth and importance, where nothing stands in the way of perfection except the inability of the woman to solve the problems of her own environment.

It is easier, of course, to criticise than to create, and doubtless there are many of us who now exclaim, who would, were the problem ours, make as many



mistakes and be as bewildered by a question of choice. For the market is more or less limited, and but few traditions have moulded the national taste—none in fact, for our more sumptuous modern departures. Out of pure discouragement women are willing to accept conditions as they are, the bother of accomplishing anything is so great, the difficulties to be overcome so manifold. For all that, there seems to be nothing to excuse the almost universal negligence displayed, the shirking of responsibilities entailed by given and new conditions, the disregard of beauty in favour of utility, and the absolute inappreciation for the general aspect of things. Another point, too, suggests itself. As most of these superb newer houses are adaptations of foreign models, the question of window treatment ought to be as carefully considered in relation to the epoch followed, as any detail of fireplace or panelling. Exactly where the tradition for the display of costly laces comes in, it would be interesting to know. Where no tradition exists, as when brown stone has been retained in houses whose interiors have been remodelled and made to follow a foreign fashion, then some treatment should be agreed upon which, while preserving the harmonies indoors, would do so without over-accentuating, on the other side, the modern and often the vulgar note.

The most successful treatment of windows, as seen from the street, is that in which neither the colour nor design of the thin draperies is made to present too



strong a contrast to the tone of the house. Nothing, therefore, serves the purpose better than a fine hand-made Brussels net, slightly full, its edges finished with a flat and narrow lace. If the net be coarse, the whole effect is destroyed, the coarse meshes serving as reflecting surfaces. When thin, the net serves its one legitimate purpose—that of protection, but it does so in a kindly tempered way, giving you the merest suggestion of the coloured draperies within. Being fine, it does not obtrude itself; it is like a woman's veil in that. Being slightly tinted, too, just off the white, it never becomes a conspicuous feature of any façade.

In ready-made houses the many-times-enforced application of stuffs to conceal the obtrusively ugly indoors, has led to a deplorable overcrowding of rooms with all sorts of irrelevant hangings. The worst of these are of wool, catching dust like a carpet, and perennially robbing a room of that which should be its great desideratum—a suggestion at least of the purifying effects of sunshine and air. In houses of any architectural importance where the window and door openings are decorative features in themselves, the concealment of them by a hanging takes on the nature of a crime. Rods cannot be indiscriminately applied and curtains hung at the will of the mistress, who has perhaps some fine textile to display, or who feels the need of a splash of warm colour. One must respect the work of the architect, who, in obedience to the laws of an epoch, may have adopted the pediment of one



school, or the semi-circular arch of another. In his distribution of these various openings his art has been expended, not only giving to a room its special character, but enforcing upon it its own special requirements. No one therefore could hang a thick curtain from a straight rod put up over a pointed Adam arch. Nor should one dream of concealing the beautiful panelling and well-studied trim of a French window by draperies carelessly applied.

To a study of these questions, the intelligent, beauty-loving householder devotes infinite time. She consults old prints, or travels miles to see a noteworthy example. She has drawings made. Now and then she has miniature models of the openings constructed in pasteboard or wood; to these, hangings are adjusted, every detail of curtain-fold, of tassel and cord, being carefully considered. These she modifies and improves, knowing well that any overtime expended on the subject now, will be amply repaid by her future peace of mind. She never regrets the hours expended or the patience exercised. Therefore she never assails you with regrets. If any trouble prevails, she herself knows what it is, and that her failures have resulted from no lack of a careful consideration, but from the inability of the labour-market to supply her. And as she ensures her own peace of mind, so she ensures that of her visitors. We ought all to be grateful to her, for an inch too high or too low in a loop, the over-weight of a tassel or the undue elabora-



tion of a lambrequin may destroy the whole scheme.

Questions of colour and textile are of supreme importance, and must include not only a consideration of that which is harmonious to the eye, but of that which is proper to the epoch. Reference has already been made to the pains taken by some in securing right tones, for no possessor of exact knowledge is content with those supplied in general manufacture. Special orders have been given to celebrated looms—not sweeping, ill-considered orders, but orders for samples, and even for the threads themselves. And these threads and odd bits of silk, as I know, have been lived with for weeks, new dyes being ordered when a result proved unsatisfactory, and new combinations of other threads, until years have been consumed in the production of one tone. We read of such things in the lives of ancients perfecting a glaze, and are generous in the award of our approbation. But in the rush of modern days, the unthinking are unmindful, and even when they stop for an instant to admire, fail either to appreciate or commend. Yet these are the pains by which perfection is accomplished, and which go to make results accepted by future generations as standards. They are not wasted pains, since a beautiful house is something more than an individual possession. It is a contribution to many lives, and should be that which is embodied in the spirit of the Merzuzah, nailed by Hebrews to the door-posts of their houses—a place in which those who enter may



find blessings, and from which those who depart may carry content.

In general, the thick curtains which our climate compels us to adopt, are made either to contrast in colour with the walls, or to carry out their general tone. Thus the same material is used both as wall covering and curtain, often being repeated in the furniture covering, since too great a variety robs any interior of repose. There are those, of course, who will always insist on using what they have, or who count nothing more important than the display of certain long-hoarded treasures—those snares that entangle so hopelessly the unwary foot. Yet a curtain, no matter how beautiful it may be in itself, is necessarily bad when it becomes an obtrusive feature. When the need of some warmer note is felt, the carpet may supply it, a chair, a sofa, or a cushion. Better than all else, are an open fire and flowers. The value of flowers in keying up a room is too often forgotten, yet flowers are essential in some interiors, especially in those of great elegance, which might otherwise seem cold. They lend to any room a human and a habitable look.

There need be no monotony in a room where wall-covering and curtains are alike. In one eighteenth-century house, where the door and window openings are of white marble, a charming, low-toned, green silk brocade is used everywhere. Relief is obtained by the dark mahogany of the tables and cabinets,



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the introduction of flowers and plants, the dominating effect of interesting portraits, the dull gold of the frames being repeated in an elaborately designed Adam mirror above the mantel.

When the walls are panelled, the problem of the hangings is a different one. If the room adheres strictly to a period, the colour and quality of the curtain must represent the epoch. Many rooms, however, are only adaptations, in which case a greater latitude is allowed. In one library, for instance, panelled in dark French oak, though the arch of the window openings and the treatment of the mouldings follow Louis Sixteenth traditions, red rep is used in the curtains and on the furniture. This is bordered by a light band showing an Etruscan design. The library being small, the effect is agreeable. In one of larger size, the repetition of the Etruscan figure would be monotonous and therefore wearisome.

From no house counted as beautiful are doors banished, their places being taken by curtains. The very statement of so trite a truth might seem absurd, if one did not remember the craze once existing among us for getting rid of our doors. It is no longer ago than twenty years, that one saw on every side of us new houses being built, in which whole sides of a room were eliminated in order that hangings might be substituted. I recall one—and in New York, too—where all that divided the stairs from the living-room with its fireplace and valuable pictures, was a stretch



of green velours. Doors, in fact, were considered an encumbrance, and the need of privacy a sort of guilty assumption—as if there were aught to conceal! This mental attitude may possibly have been engendered by the fact that our doors were ugly in themselves, that they were inappropriately placed and opened inconveniently, being a nuisance, in fact, and taking up too much space. Moreover, except for those in mahogany, we possessed no beautiful doors; and even with these, scant attention was paid to their proper placing, the desire to display at all cost a rare possession being always uppermost in the householder's mind.

All this is now changed. To the position of our doors, with regard to the axes of the room, and to the detailing of them, our architects pay great attention. They are made to balance properly with the window openings. The best types of Europe are studied. The over-door is given, sometimes as a frieze, and now as a frame enclosing a picture. We have, too, the rounded or the pointed arch in marble or in wood. The meanings, too, of the entrances are carefully preserved, dignity being given when that is required, a sense of well-secured privacy when that is the desideratum. One other point is always respected, that of transitions, the feeling of too abrupt a passage from one apartment to another, differing from it in character, not being possible in the well-designed house.

Then the doors themselves! What departures we have made in these twenty years! One need not, of



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course, expect to find, unless imported from foreign palaces, any that are as beautiful as those seen, for example, at Versailles, where the tones of old paint and gilding, with the loveliness of design, make creations so enchanting that one involuntarily takes a seat before them, letting one's whole nature be played upon. For there we find grace of line, flight of fancy, the sustained note of a central idea with variations played upon it. Among our imported doors, however, we have many of great beauty. There are those to which reference has already been made in the chapter on bedrooms, their oblong panels carved with flowers. There are those, too, of French salons, genuine doors, the mouldings of the panels gilded and following the design of the panelled walls. Then there are doors opening out of old oak halls, and into libraries—richly carved, heavy, massive doors, centuries old, the figures of the cherubs carved on them being life-size.

We have, too, the inlaid or painted doors of other schools—Spanish and Italian doors, old English and Dutch doors; doors from everywhere, in fact, lending a distinction to our houses of to-day, that were never found here a quarter of a century ago. Not the least interesting part of them is seen in the locks, handles, and keys, hooks and hinges, subjects to which we have hitherto paid but little attention. The interest of some of these is very great, the work representing an art in itself, the chiselling on those of old French doors being especially lovely, the very form and pro-



portion of the general design bearing a well-considered relation to the whole. Wrought iron is used on doors of an earlier date, and possesses an equal interest, especially when some rare and well-executed design is found.

This same respect, for detail, by the way, is shown in the window fasteners, strict adherence to the epoch being observed. The casual visitor may overlook these finer observances, though they well repay careful study.

In country houses, where less of a necessity exists for protecting one's self from a neighbour across the way, that which may sometimes be pardoned in town becomes absolutely unforgivable. No possible justification can be urged for overcrowding a window. The quality of the hangings may be as rich, the exigencies of social life even among the trees being what they are in these modern days, but the obtrusive is as vulgar. Although brocades, tapestries, velvets, and silks are all found, they belong only to houses whose importance serves as their justification. The very moment their use creates a stuffy impression, the houses in which they appear are put beyond the pale. It is a common, not an uncommon fault, however, to find draperies so employed, the fault being those of people who never can escape the alluring temptation of using things which they happen to have.

That which one wants in the country is a window and the air that the window is supposed to admit.



Draperies therefore should be subordinated, used with discretion and so employed as to be forgotten. One should always bear in mind that there are things to be looked at in the country besides those adorning the walls, and that in order to see what nature has provided one must look past a curtain. This makes the over-accentuation of a colour or a textile with figures something more than a mere error of judgment, smacking as it does of an inherent defect of vision. Because of the out-of-doors which needs to be felt in the country, a curtain should be so made as to be well drawn back in the daytime—never like curtains in town, which have a certain excuse for staying fixed, since city windows are only opened at set intervals.

The temptation to urge a plea is hardly to be resisted in closing this chapter—several pleas, in fact. One is that plate glass should not be so extensively used. It is delightful for shops, but not lovely for all other windows. It rarely adds to the interior charm of a city house, since the necessity of covering it is instantly felt. The moment that this is done, we get the assorted plaster and patch effect of the thin draperies. Then, too, how much lovelier are the small or leaded panes! With these, if necessary, further protection from the street can be secured by the thinnest of gauze draperies, which add not only a humanising touch, but are often most delightful in the way of colour faintly suggested through the pane.

Then there are the outside blinds! Why should



these be so frequently discarded in environments where they might be permitted? A dark green blind closed on a hot summer day, makes a delightful interior, in which every comfort and relaxation is promised within, and no affront is given without. Awnings are, of course, a good and only possible substitute in many instances, but here again it is unfortunately not infrequent to see colours clashing with the walls, and which, as when reds are chosen, inspire only a sense of added heat and discomfort to every one.

Although during the last quarter of a century we have been paying more and more attention to the question of window boxes for summer and winter, we have not yet acquired the art of their arrangement, as one finds it expressed, for example, in London. There, not only the blending of tones, as with pink geraniums and grey stone, is carefully considered, but the question of form is not ignored. We incline too much to the straight line, being content with unbroken rows of plants arranged by the florist, when the introduction of an upright or two in the way of a plant perennially green might transform the whole arrangement.

Neither have we yet acquired the altruistic spirit of that Boston woman, who left her flowers blooming in her window boxes during her absence from town, in order that those who were left to walk the blistering streets, might have something pretty and green to regale them.



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This same consideration, I must urge again, ought always to be shown the passer-by, and if I may be permitted again to return to the similes quoted above, I should say that quite as great as is the importance of having a pleasant expression of face in public, is that of having one in our windows. For—

This is the window's message in honour to its queen,  
Thine is a double kingdom, and she is set between.



## Chapter IX

### Fireplaces

THOUGH the fact may not be generally admitted, it must be confessed that as a people we are sadly deficient in the art of the fireplace. Even when good examples have been secured from abroad, the most distressing taste has often been displayed in their treatment. Not far from town I came across a beautiful chimneypiece of Caen stone in a room designed and furnished altogether after seventeenth century models, where the shelf was set out with two modern miniature electric lamps at either end, and nothing else!

On another occasion I saw, in the drawing-room of a collector who prided himself on his taste, a wonderful Gothic chimneypiece insulted by a row of plaster-cast singing-boys, placed round the edges of the carved hood. There were seven of these little horrors, three on either side, and one perched on the summit.

Although these particular instances may be set down as individual, not national sins, our country



is full of others quite as bad. That which makes most of them unforgivable is the fact that they have been committed not in ignorance, but in pride—that same pride and craving for false appearances which cause the poor deluded woman, with no clean petticoats to her name, to spend all her week's wages on some feathered hat, to which the illustrated newspaper has given a catching title. No sincere desire to express the actual, or to attain to the needful, has marked the struggle of our people toward the perfect fireplace.

All that has been done in the way of excellence has been done by a few, honestly striving for that perfection which, built up on the verities, stands first for the true and is then elaborated into the beautiful. Our main purpose seems to have been to produce what we liked to boast of as "artistic," or that which somebody else has quoted as the most approved of fashions. This has led us to borrowing terms, and titles—without really knowing what any of them meant. Names, like "over-mantel," have deluded us, and these names once assured us as proper, we have been satisfied to dwell with certain monstrosities created by the carpenter, which among other incongruities were made to include a varied assortment of receptacles for knick-knacks and cheap mirrors reflecting nothing.

In the use of materials, too, we have been strangely restless, feverishly adopting and discarding one after



another, without stopping to reason out the question for ourselves. First, we would no longer have wood. So we threw over the simple old mantels of our forefathers and indulged ourselves in all the ugliness of custom-made marbles. Our houses once filled with these, we reacted again and went back to wood, framing our hearths with grotesque and hideous shapes, products of disordered minds.

Then there was the gas log, which with its first discovery threw us quite off our balance; while the numerous ramifications of the steam-heater have been leading us ever since into countless subterfuges and insincerities. We were bewitched, as we always are, by the idea of a labour-saving device, and, thinking with steam to have discovered a way to avoid the extra work entailed by the ashes of an open fire, for a time we went over, body and soul, to the radiator, though we lacked courage sufficient to do away altogether with the signs and tokens of better things. The semblances we would have. Even within the last thirty years, houses counted as sumptuous in their day have been built, here in New York, in which parlours have been furnished with marble mantelpieces, no detail of the fireplace neglected, neither tongs, shovel, nor fender, except that there was never a chimney through which the smoke might escape!

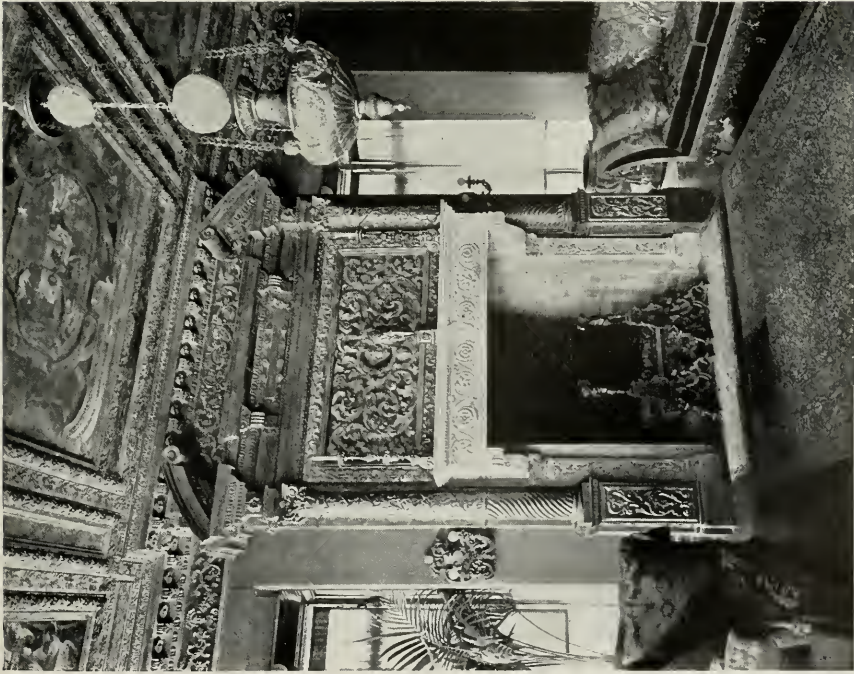
No wonder, then, that the whole question is one involving infinite confusion, since we have never been absolutely honest in a single one of our departures.



Had we been, had we said frankly, "No!—I won't have an open fire because of the dust, and I won't lie about it either: I won't have chimneypieces that mean nothing, hearths that stand for deception, walls disfigured by pretences,"—had we had the courage to say all this, think of how interesting our architectural development might have been! What originality in interior decoration might have been fostered! A new national school, perhaps, in which rooms without fireplaces might have been designed after new models, giving us structures which at least would have stood for truth.

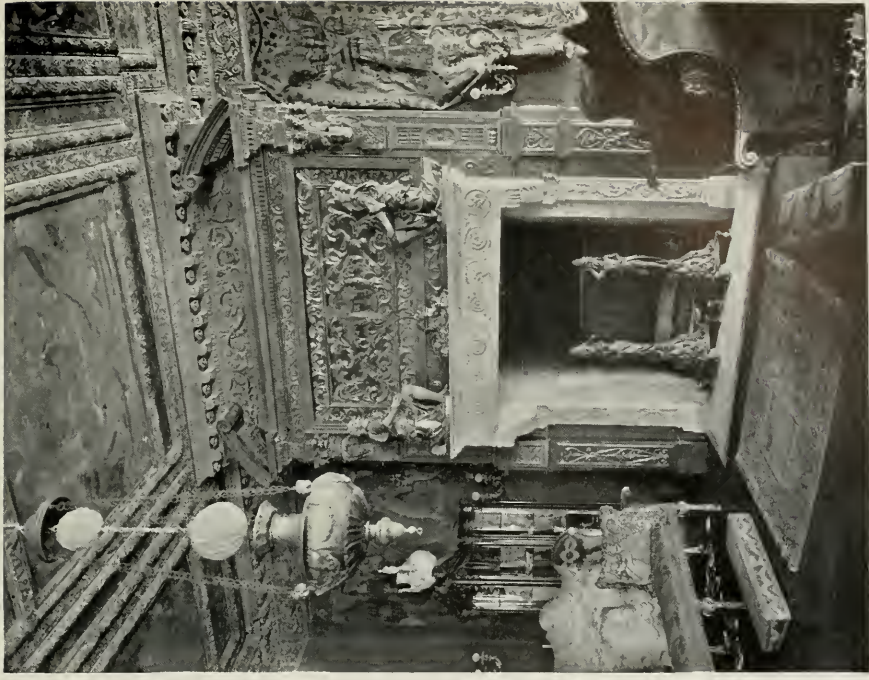
Since, then, as a people, we have never quite known what we have wanted most, there has necessarily been no impetus to produce it, no effort made either to perfect the useful or to develop the appropriate. All progress is fostered in two ways. There may be an ideal springing full-born, like Minerva from the head of Jove, which given to a generation becomes the ideal by which that generation grows. Or a need may exist in many minds, its final satisfaction being the outgrowth of universal demands, supplied now simultaneously in diverse directions (as flying-machines have been perfected, for instance), and again by the brain of one man embodying and collecting in himself the hitherto disintegrated powers of his day, as Edison has done. But the want must come first, and we as a people have never known which we wanted most—fireplaces or steam-heaters!





WHITE MARBLE MANTEL WITH GILDED WOOD OVER-MANTEL

As the chimney is set at right angles to the entrance, this arrangement of the sofas does not unduly elongate the room



FIREPLACE IN TOWN HOUSE OF MR. H. W. POOR, NEW YORK CITY  
A particularly delightful arrangement of furniture and hangings







Had we known, would we have been so willing to perpetuate frauds, so complacent about surrounding ourselves with tokens of things long, long since emptied of their meaning? Would we have been so dishonest in construction, so false to every sentiment? Or would we have been guilty of so many other sins—tolerated placing our hearths where no grouping about them was possible? defaced our chimneypieces with so many hideous and useless objects, accustoming and educating the eye in the ugly and untrue?

The genuine fire-lover never has abandoned, and never will abandon, his blaze. He alone understands its companionship, its vivifying influence, its sentiment. He can tell you what the fire says, what it answers, what it inspires. Cherishing it as he does, willing as he is to sacrifice to its maintenance, has he not a right to complain of those who, not sharing his beliefs, have stolen, and then so wantonly abused, his best-beloved symbols?

No one chimneypiece can be referred to offhand as being more beautiful than another, nor can any one period be regarded as standing for the one and only type of excellence. Whenever a given room is made to follow a particular period, however, the form and treatment of the chimney must necessarily be that which the period demands, the same rules being followed as those which have governed in the rest of the room. Every age has had its manner of building and developing, beginning with the time when the



fireplace stood in the middle of the room and the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof. The French have gone through one evolutionary process, the Italians another, the English still a third. Fireplaces have projected into the room or been sunk into the wall. They have been protected by huge carved hoods, or been decorated above the opening by moulding applied to a flat wall surface. But in each and every case the architect has by his choice of form and decoration suggested, when he has not actually carried out his construction, that the cornice, not the mantel-shelf, should mark the point toward which his scheme was tending. His space above the opening was always treated with appropriate dignity, made either (as its chief point of interest) to dominate the room, or so treated as to be brought into harmony with its surrounding walls and window openings. He never left it to be tortured into line by inexperienced carpenters or ambitious amateurs. This makes it something more than absurd for us who import ancient chimney-pieces to place them in environments not adapted to them, as when a Renaissance fireplace is set up in a modern hall; or to defame them with inappropriate objects.

If the possessor of imported fireplaces, therefore, does not know where a given example should be placed or how it should be treated, an obligation to study into the question becomes imperative. He has no right to solace himself with studies of shop-made copies



or bad uses of things in the houses of his friends, nor yet to take evidence on hearsay. When the opportunity for extensive travel is not his, there are always at least old prints at his command. For, although there is no law compelling any one to the adoption of special periods in houses, a period once adopted by the choice of distinctive objects makes a study of those special periods obligatory. Every conscientious possessor of beautiful examples understands this. So, too, does the earnest seeker after the best manner of expressing the needful and appropriate.

I talked with such a woman the other day. She has lived for years abroad. The question of such simple appointments as curtain rods happened to be broached, and the mistakes made in these days by their over-accentuation, mistakes that resulted from our revolt against the stiff and awkward lambrequin of some sixty years ago. This led her to tell me that for some time she had been delving into libraries and the portfolios of collectors anywhere available in order to equip herself. I asked her about fireplaces and discovered that she had studied as thoroughly into that subject, too. She could refer to various examples of beautiful iron fire-backs, with their groups of sculptured figures, found scattered throughout Europe and knew, of course, every requirement of tong and shovel of whatever school. We disagreed somewhat about brass, she thinking it a useless expenditure of domestic strength to have anything about the fire



that required so constant a polishing. I succeeded, however, in nearly converting her to my views. For, certainly, if we are so insistent on using only things which require no labour to care for, why, I asked her, should we not for the same reason oxidise our table silver, since our climate necessitates its periodic polishing. Then, too, as I urged, the beauty of shining brass repays every moment that is spent upon it, especially when it is old and a little dented. I know that nothing, not even the grace of beautiful ormolu, or the dignity of wrought iron, would tempt me to give up my brass andirons with their flickers of light, their power to hold and give back to me, like a 'jewel I cherish, flames caught out of the very heart of the blaze as it sings on my hearth. Moreover, I believe that, were the power mine to build as I chose, I would never commit myself to a period in which brass about my special fireplace could have no part, so dearly do I love the colour, so full of meaning is all that the brass reflects. To the last ember dying among the ashes, the knobs of my andirons are as true as Alpine peaks to the last rays of the setting sun.

To make a fireplace interesting it is not necessary to have imported pieces, though the possession of wealth seems to imply a desire to imitate the foreign. It is perfectly possible to give dignity at least to the plainest chimneypiece by a simple arrangement of mirror or pictures (not both) with candlesticks, a bronze, or even a plaster cast having beauty in itself.



Questions of proportion are all-important. Neither mirror nor picture need exactly fill a space, though neither should be so small as to become a mere spot upon the wall. The mirror when used should never be hung so high that looking into it involves a feat of gymnastics, nor should it be hung at all if that which it reflects from an opposite wall possesses no interest in itself. One wants repose about a fireplace. The gaze when lifted from the blaze in which one's own pictures have been building, should never be made to encounter that which would dispel a pleasanter impression. The crowding together of photographs is bad, and the use of draperies altogether reprehensible. Composition must be studied not only in the balance of the square by the upright, but by the objects on the end and in the centre of the horizontal line. Scattered objects are as distracting as scattered thoughts. There must be the suggestion of a given, well-defined motive. Permissible as the absence of the motive may be in the room of a college student who crowds his mantel with his pipes, the mirror over it with cards, and his walls with trophies, it is inexcusable in surroundings where maturer thought is to be implied, the obligations of formal intercourse respected. Dignity becomes essential here, repose, architectural form, since the fireside is really the altar, and therefore the point on which the interest converges, luring the eye and drawing even the body.

Photographs of even beautiful women become



discordant notes. An attempt, dictated by sentimental considerations, to keep one of them among the candlesticks and clock of a Louis Sixteenth bedroom, nearly ruined the room. It became impossible to see anything else on entering. When finally removed, the relief to the eye was at once apparent. For we have among us, fortunately, some fireplaces of great and exceptional beauty, not only architecturally, because they are adapted to their special environments, but because a conscientious and intelligent regard has been observed in their treatment. I know one in a Louis Sixteenth room. Above the marble shelf rises a mirror, carried, as are the window openings, to the cornice. The panel is arched with beautiful mouldings and carved reveals. The marble shelf is supported by delicately carved pilasters. On it stand the ormolu clock and candelabra of the period, genuine examples purchased only after long and conscientious search and research. Of ormolu, too, are the *chenets* and shovels, charming in their proportion and design, as are all the other appointments of the fire found in this particular house. They are a perpetual source of delight to those gathered about them, satisfying the eye by their form, and beguiling the mind by their grace and beauty. Iron would be a desecration in fireplaces belonging to this school, as would andirons so large as to overcrowd the opening.

In great Gothic fireplaces, on the other hand, or those of Jacobean England, the miniature would be





LOUIS XV FIREPLACE OF MARBLE DECORATED WITH ORMOLU

The garlands of the frieze enclosing medallions showing women's heads, are repeated in the two consoles and in the fire-arms. Sculptured figures adorn the fire-back



LOUIS XV FIREPLACE IN THRONE ROOM OF FONTAINEBLEAU

Carved marble, ornamented with ormolu shell in middle, and lion's head at each end.  
Fire-back shows arms of France and Navarre.







out of place and ridiculous, while ormolu, with its traditions of ultra-refinement, would be altogether an absurdity. The very massiveness of the fireplace calls for something of like importance and proportion. Among these, therefore, we find iron showing uprights sometimes four feet in height, and cast in figures now single and now in groups. The shovels and tongs, too, are of iron, requiring strong hands to wield them, but none the less carefully designed and proportioned on that account.

As the fireplace is the chief source of interest in a room, the grouping of chairs and sofas about it involves an exercise of the greatest tact and discretion. Happily this is a point on which more thought is being daily expended. A silly little straight-back commerce-made gilt chair has no business before the fire at any time, being as ill-conducive to comfort as a school-room bench. In a library, one wants the ample, the reposeful, that which invites to the quiet hour. The drawing-room has still other requirements, independent of purely historical values. One must provide for conversation here, make interruptions easy, and never neglect the possibility of tea.

In rooms of sufficient size the placing of two long sofas facing each other, and at right angles to the fire, solves many a difficulty. It is a fashion which has been followed for some years, though the real success of the method depends upon the place occupied by the hearth itself. When the entrance to a long room is



in one of the narrower walls and directly faces the chimney, the windows being on either side, the effect of the sofas longitudinally placed only adds to the feeling of length, besides robbing the arrangement of that suggestion of privacy which is so desirable in fireside groups. For that reason it is better when the fireplace comes at the end of a long vista to place but one sofa, directly opposite the blaze. When a table with its lamps and books is placed back of this one sofa, an idea of protection is at once suggested.

When, however, the fireplace is at right angles to the entrance door, the two long sofas placed on either side of the hearth suggest the need of approaches which are altogether delightful,—to still more secluded corners, as it were, and yet closer to the blaze. In one drawing-room that I know, the fireplace is of stone richly carved, its hood extending to the cornice. The two long sofas facing each other are covered with old ruby-red velvet, with cushions adapted to every requirement of polite elbow and back. Drawn up by the heads of these sofas, and easily turned for a tête-à-tête, are several large cathedral chairs, also covered with red. That which makes the composition so delightful, so suggestive of hospitality and charm, is the fact that the door does not immediately open upon the scene. One who enters must first turn, getting with his momentary pause on the threshold a certain mental adjustment. To approach without being bidden would be impossible.



Colour, textile, the quality and design of the furniture, the prevailing fashion of the room itself, all tend to relieve this arrangement of sofas and chairs around a fireplace of too great a sense of sameness. Individuality, and therefore variety, are lent by the householder's touch by the flowers she introduces in juxtaposition, the pictures and porcelains she affects, her arrangement of lights, and the provision she makes either for the comfort of her guests, or their observance of a rigid formality. Absolutely distinct, then, from that of the example just quoted, is the impression produced by an almost identical arrangement in another drawing-room. It is an Adam room. The white marble fireplace follows classic lines. On its shelf are three rare porcelain vases, beautiful in colour and form. Over the whole hangs a mirror enclosed in a frame of gilded wood, a genuine example, charming in design and showing delicately carved birds and branches outspread on the wall, with spaces between which relieve the composition of all suggestion of heaviness. The two sofas in this instance are covered with a blue-green silk damask like that of the walls, while chairs upholstered with the same stuff are drawn up in casual fashion. A table prevents too ready an approach to the fire.

Not for a moment must it be inferred that the visitor in either case must stumble over anything on his way to the blaze. Access is easy, though guarded. To so arrange furniture that one must bump against

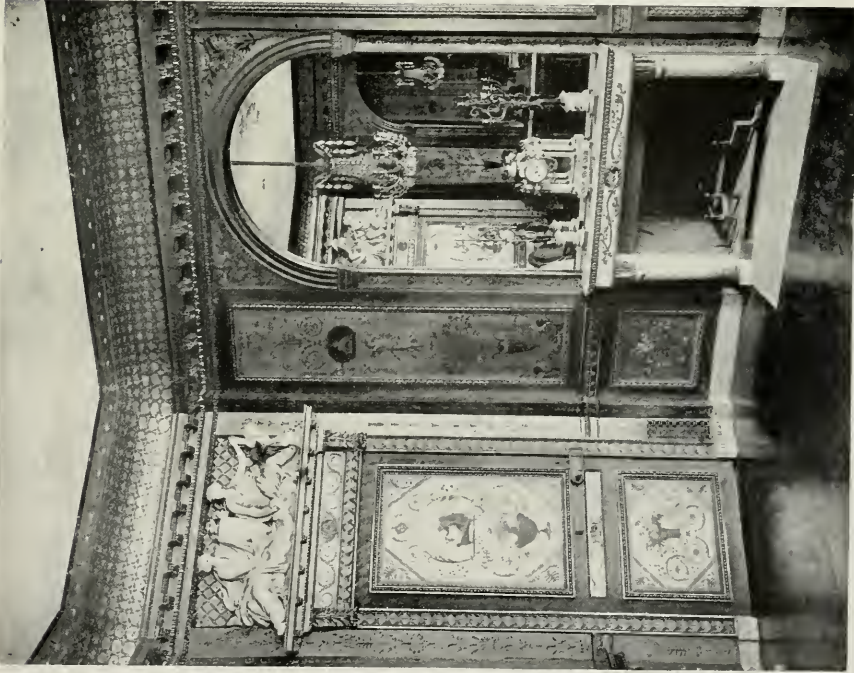


it is a crime, but in rooms that are ample this necessity never exists, and every latitude is allowed the householder for securing not only all the protection she demands in the distribution of her groups, but in the exercise of all the originality she possesses.

In small rooms, on the other hand, approaches to the fire should be left absolutely free. In ready-made houses this is a subject too often neglected, especially in those where the room is narrow and the entrance door directly faces the fireplace. Groups of stationary sofas and chairs suggestive of intimacy are impossible here, and the really tactful hostess never attempts it. She leaves the fireplace free to all, to those who would like to stand on her hearth rug, and those who come in for the moment chilled. Her stationary sofas and chairs she arranges in protected places, where the influence of the flames can be felt without being monopolised.

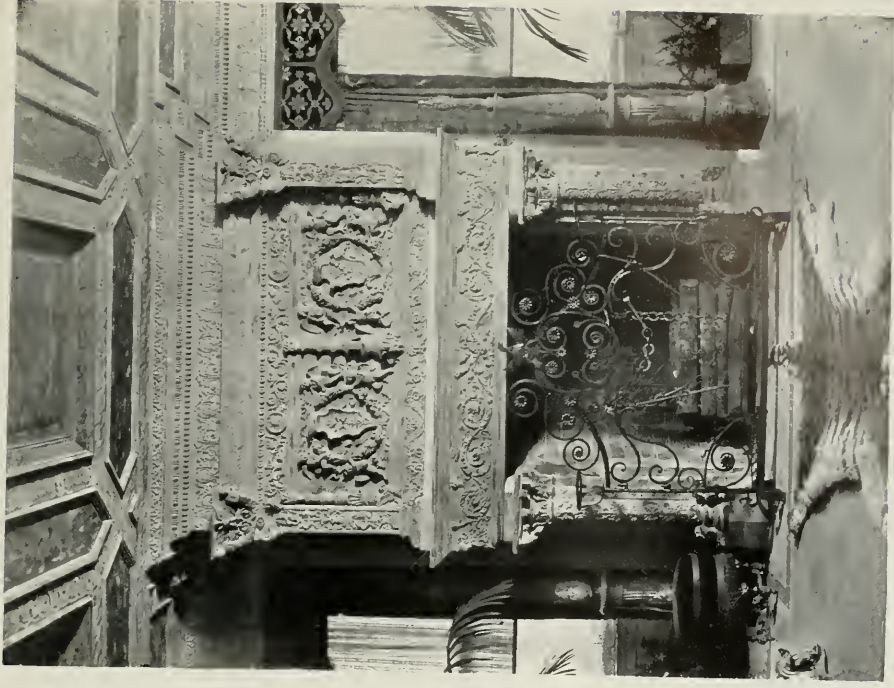
The special treatment of the hearth involves a question in which no two sets of people are ever found to agree. There must always be those who cling to their ashes, as there must be those who insist on the brightly garnished hearth-stone, some daily new arrangement of kindling and cut paper which makes the whole affair look as though the jeweller had been called in to assist. There are those, too, who like fireboards in summer and those who like cut branches, even pots of flowers when the days grow warm. No one rule can be set down, nor is any universally





LOUIS XVI WHITE MARBLE FIREPLACE IN QUEEN'S BOUDOIR AT  
FONTAINEBLEAU

White marble ornamented with ormolu



CARVED FIREPLACE IN THE HALL OF A NEW YORK HOUSE  
The iron screen is an especially beautiful one







observed. To some the whole question must always remain one of silly affectation about which there can be no reasoning; while to others the only point worth considering is one of pure affection. Human sentiments are so closely involved with those who love the fireside that every latitude in the way of ashes must be allowed. *For it is the fireplace which tells the whole story of the house.* One reads it in the kind of chairs drawn up to the blaze—the solitary chair, sometimes, with its table and lamp,—and even in the way the chair is made to face. One sees it in the picture over the shelf, in the candles set out, in the things which one has chosen to place on the mantel, in the ashes on the hearth, in the way the logs are laid, the tongs and shovels, the extra wood or lump of ever-ready cannel coal. One knows at once whether refinement prevails, good housekeeping, regard for the niceties, or only sham; whether the daily intercourse is fed by sentiment, or whether the whole life is arid of finer touches. And all this is true whatever the fireplace, whether Gothic, or Jacobean, or eighteenth-century, whether it be found in summer camp or city house, in bedroom or in salon.

“Show me a man’s fireplace, and I will show you the man.”



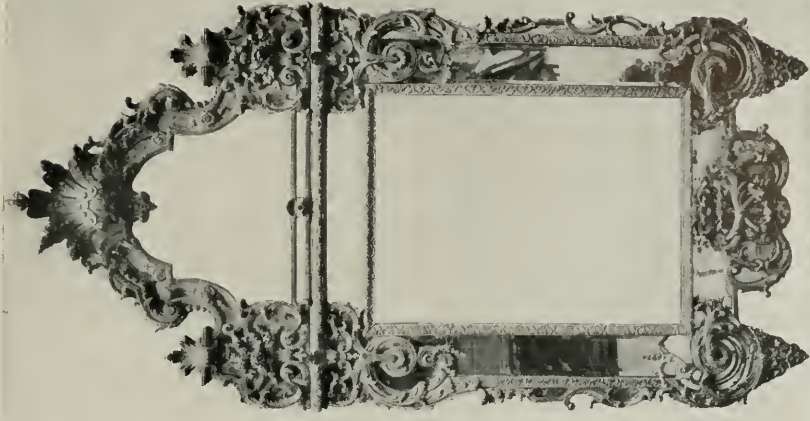
## Chapter X

### Some Important Details

THE discovery and application of electricity as an illuminating medium, have enabled us to formulate into more definite lines certain principles of interior lighting. With electricity we can, for the first time and at will, throw a light up on an object or throw it down. We can conceal it when we choose, as in the cove of a ceiling, without the necessity of showing an ugly apparatus, as when we were accustomed to using a row of gas jets, protected by green painted tins. These various possibilities, well proved and established, have all tended to stimulate our interest in the decorative value of lights rightly placed and distributed, as well as in the perfection of those forms through which these lights are conveyed.

With the discovery of gas as an illuminant, on the other hand, we had thrown over every æsthetic sense. Blares of jets, turned on full, became the fashion, and no house of any importance was counted as perfect, without its chandelier suspended from the ceiling, and this without any regard for the proportions or

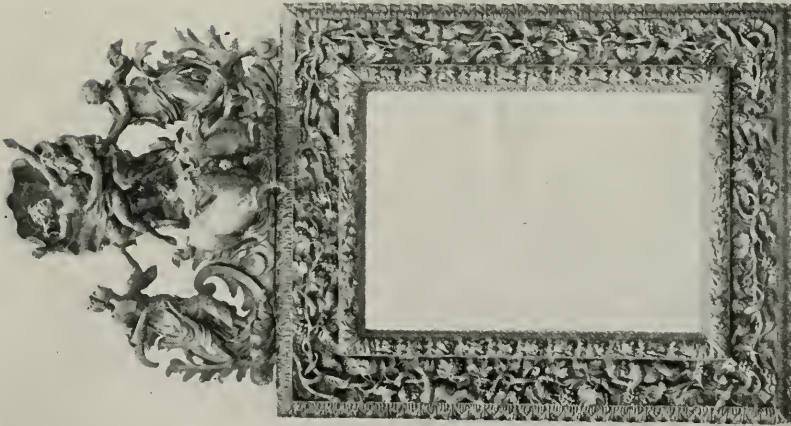




LOUIS XIV GILDED MIRROR



LOUIS XVI GILDED BRASS BRACKET



CARVED MIRROR, MUSÉE CLUNY







design of the room. Oftener than not, an imitation bronze Mercury was introduced into the model. So wedded did we become to gas, indeed, as a labour-saving device, that candles were discarded except by the few, while lamps were found only in the houses of the poor or of the country dwellers.

It is not more than thirty years since certain reactions from these glaring conditions began to set in, leading to a revival of the oil lamps even in houses well supplied with gas. There were two reasons for this: the light from oil was found to be softer, while the lamps themselves could be distributed at random, without the necessity of ugly rubber tubing attached to a fixture. These revivals, however, unfortunately led to silly extravagances in the way of shades, whole industries growing up out of their manufacture, the revenues of many impecunious women being augmented as well. Good taste was abandoned, and all feeling for the appropriate thrown to the winds. In the drawing-rooms of sedate men and women, living in an atmosphere of books and mahogany, lamp shades were found resembling in every detail of tulle and rose-garland the abbreviated skirts of a ballet dancer.

The study of foreign models and the reproduction of periods are now leading us into saner and more artistic methods, increasing our sensitiveness to detail, and our readiness to acknowledge, at least, the propriety of expending some thought on the subject. For although primarily what we want is to be able



to see clearly in the dark, in attaining that end, some regard for the beautiful and appropriate should certainly be exercised. Thus the proper distribution of lights becomes an important consideration in all interiors, whether they be the small parlours of rented apartments or the sumptuous galleries of halls of state. The French, with their fine appreciation for beauty and fitness, understood all this, and in the examples furnished by them under the old régime is now to be found one of the most prolific sources of our inspiration. Not only were their fixtures objects of beauty in themselves, respecting every law of correct design and proportion, every obligation of good workmanship and propriety, but these fixtures were distributed in a way which made them component and inalienable factors of the whole.

The French architect knew how to arrange his lights so as to throw into relief and accentuate important features, as when uprights were placed on either side of a throne; how to break up the long lines of a room, as when brackets were fastened on the side walls; and also how to add to the feeling of space by so placing a chandelier or crystal lustre that, without obstructing the vision, it could still be repeated as in the reflecting surfaces of a mirror. Our best results, indeed, are but copies or adaptations of French methods although candles were used by them while we employ electricity. Our one great modern innovation is said to be the use of cove or concealed lights around a



ceiling, but as this involves no question of beauty in the fixture, pre-eminence in all that relates to artistic values may still be yielded to the French, for it was also their influence which affected the English, at the time of their so-called classic revival.

In order to illustrate certain features of the French school, it may be as well, perhaps, to describe one Louis Sixteenth salon here in New York. The room is panelled in white and gold, not the white and gold of modern imitators, but that to which time has lent tone, enhancing every grace of moulding and line. From the ceiling there hangs between two mirrors running to the cornice a silver filigree and crystal lustre, with a double row of candles distributed in groups—candles by the way being the only lights permitted in this room, so closely is the period followed. This particular chandelier is of exceptional beauty. One never loses the charm of the design in the brilliancy of the pendants, which being only accessories are necessarily not too overpowering. Hanging as it does between the two mirrors enclosed in panels, its light gives width to the apartment and brilliancy on gala nights. The eye, however, is never held by it. Around the room in other well-considered places, as on either side of a mirror or in important panels, are appliqués in ormolu, each holding several candles. On the mantelpiece are candelabra and again on pedestals, so that even without the aid of the chandelier the room may not only be sufficiently lighted, but agree-



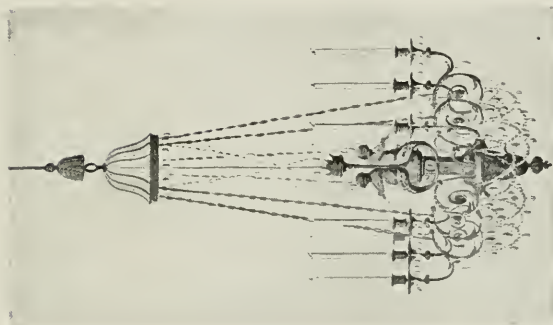
ably so, no artificial light in the world equalling in charm and poetry that of the candle. Here then we have a distribution of illuminating mediums which prove an art too often neglected—a central fixture which does not dominate and overpower, but which is softened by minor lights on other levels, as stars shine even when the moon is full. More than that, each and every fixture in the room is a thing of beauty in itself, delighting the eye even at noon-time, for they are not mere excrescences on a wall surface, their utility a lame justification for their presence, but lovely and component parts of the room, essential to the whole, adding symmetry and balance in the general arrangement. By their own individual beauty and excellence, moreover, they become a distinct contribution to one's pleasure, like any other work of art.

Charming as are candles, it is not always necessary to use them even with the antique fixture, which goes again to prove how the essential points involved in a proper distribution of lights as decorative, as well as illuminating, features were considered by the men who left us so rich a heritage. Once properly distributed, the modern inventor has only to introduce the form of a candle, or twist a connecting line into the glass cup of a cathedral lamp, to produce effects which when well-managed do not jar upon the observer with the obtrusion of too modern a note. One of the most successful and exquisite examples of his

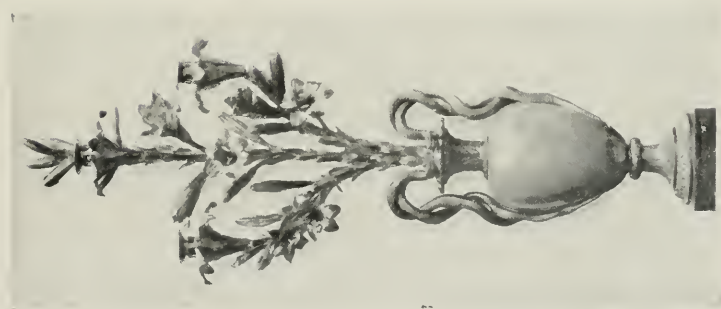




LOUIS XV CHANDELIER—ALABASTER AND  
BRASS



LOUIS XVI CHANDELIER



LOUIS XVI BRONZE CANDELABRA







skill is found in the hall of a New York house. The hall itself is of white marble, its classic columns and pediments about the door openings being an exact copy of an Adam house in London. From the ceiling hang three dull bronze chains holding a piece of alabaster, its shape being that of a Greek vase without its supporting column. It is absolutely simple, devoid of all ornament, but so enchanting in form that the eye is entranced. One knows that electricity must have been introduced inside and of sufficient strength for ample illumination, but not a hint of it is given in the way of any other visible token. The light produced is exquisite and tender, softly pervasive, felt not seen, absolutely harmonious with the cool of the marbles, and so perfect that even after one has gone out into the street the mind wanders back to it as to some old scene full of peace and poetry.

With our revival and adaptations of these different periods we have begun to adopt various uprights for supporting lights, the marble tripod of the classic school as it was affected by the newly discovered treasures of Pompeii, or the simple shaft used by the French. Many of these uprights are of great beauty and seem to add almost a structural importance to a room or hall. I have in mind some of marble ornamented with ormolu and surmounted by bronze figures holding branches for lights, and again others holding great cathedral candlesticks. With their dignity and beauty they not only compel a respect for



themselves, but make it necessary that, in their presence, some should also be shown for propriety. To insult them by introducing flaring flower-bedecked shades into their company would be an impossibility, and without doubt the tendency of the present day toward greater simplicity in lampshades is due to their influence. Stuffs and laces, at any rate, are no longer either over-accentuated or impertinently obtruded with every light, as happened when wide spreading flounces and other foolish extravagances were made to give to drawing-rooms the air of a prosperous milliner's parlour.

These various revivals of old models have also inspired our modern use of mirrors without as yet having led us into either overdoing them, or settling into ruts, as once happened when not a single brown-stone house in town was without its pier-glass between the windows and its huge mirror over the mantel, both glasses being encased in overweighted frames of walnut or gilt. Nowadays, we find these mirrors fixed as they should be in panels, and when portable, framed in some unique design of carved wood or wrought silver—foreign palaces and shops having been denuded to enrich our store. Unfortunately, we are not always happy in placing these portable mirrors, nor careful enough about studying their reflections. The French never neglected this side of the question, having always seen to it that every repetition in the way of a reflection should be one to



add to the general pleasure. Although we have adopted their method regarding the placing of mirrors opposite to each other, we have failed in their great principle concerning the objects reflected. This is especially true when the mirrors which run to a plain white ceiling are encased in simple brass bands without ornamentation. When one stands between these and looks up, the effect is distressing, being that of standing in an endless series of unadorned corridors, like those of a hospital or prison house. Such an impression would be easily obviated by the hanging of a beautiful chandelier between the mirrors, or by breaking up the bare lines of the brass frame with the introduction of some graceful ornamentation. For the bare and ugly are bad enough at any time without the necessity for reproducing them indefinitely. Mirrors are only justified in decoration when they are made to repeat something which is particularly pleasant. They are the quotation marks of an architectural scheme, and stupid when the quoted phrase itself has no intrinsic value.

And as we are careless regarding our reflections, so are we especially thoughtless, concerning not only our vistas—those objective points in any formal design toward which the eye is unconsciously carried—but also that other great essential in all composition—the art of transition. It is an art presenting many difficulties, though when once it is mastered the artist



is proved. The writer must acquire it. When it eludes him, he resorts to the use of a space. The public speaker unequal to the effort which its laws entail, remains abrupt, periodic, wearying you with a series of shocks, and the necessity for making frequent mental readjustments. The painter who has failed to master this art becomes scattered, the actor a creature of fits and starts, while the hostess never succeeds in putting you at ease.

If, then, a given number of rooms are made to open out of each other, or a single room is so arranged that the eye is carried to a given point as to a fireplace or a picture, certainly the process of arriving at that point should be made both easy and agreeable, the eye never arrested on its way by anything which startles. One colour should not clash upon another, one epoch be at war with its successor. A disregard of these obligations is that which makes it so unrestful and unpleasant in certain houses to be obliged to pass from a so-called Japanese room into one where Turkish hangings prevail, as if we were not in a gentleman's house at all, but at some international exposition. This, too, is what makes it a misery to be obliged to look past certain shades of red, on again past blue, in order to arrive at still different tones of red, or even yellow.

As for the objective point itself, the end of the vista, that which is placed there, though perfectly proper perhaps in its immediate surroundings, may be altogether objectionable when seen in relation to



intermediary objects, as from another room through which, when the doors are opened, you must look. An object of minor importance placed at the end of a vista entails at once a loss of dignity to the whole sweep. An inharmonious colour, like that of a curtain or a lampshade, produces the same effect. One must know how to carry the eye, and to what sort of an object it should be carried, as they do in churches where the vision is made to sweep along the aisle and rest upon the altar. A single tiny flame without any architectural arrangement, placed at the end of a vista, might suggest mystery but never dignity, never awe, never an uplifting of the spirit. As it is in churches, so it must be in all houses. When the eye is carried to a single object, the character of that object must be considered. Dignity is at once destroyed when the object is inadequate, as when miniature mirrors, for instance, are placed at the ends of long corridors.

When it comes to a question of ceilings and floors, most women discover themselves altogether in the hands of their architects. They find it hard to argue over figures representing scales of measurement about which they know nothing, although they do know that a few inches too high or too low in the lift of a ceiling may hopelessly destroy all sense of comfort in a room. It is only after a ceiling is placed that the amateur realises a possible error, by which time in most cases it is too late to make a change. With simple materials



like paper or burlaps, a picture rod and a pot of paint or kalsomine, the problem is never difficult nor the expense of alterations great. But when the materials used include carved panels or a stucco beautifully designed, change implies difficulties too costly to be overcome. The most obvious fault, therefore, found in most of our ceilings, is that, though beautiful in themselves, they are often overpowering, suggesting a tendency to settle down upon the head. They may be too heavily overweighted with ornament for small rooms, though most of the trouble lies with the cornice and the failure of the cornice to suggest its legitimate purpose—that of lifting and supporting the parts which spring from it. A study of the various ceilings illustrating these pages will prove how often a neglect of the cornice has led to certain unhappy impressions.

As one wants to feel a ceiling well lifted overhead, so one wants to know that a floor is well planted underfoot. Too great prominence given to set figures, as we learned long years ago with our carpets, has a tendency to make a floor jump at you as you enter a room. Yet we forgot all this when we began to inlay our floors, covering them with patterns and finishing them with borders that have since proved distracting. Our most beautiful and successful departures have been made in those in which the inlay preserved one tone, its repose undisturbed by a border.

The same rule holds good with the rugs. Patches



of little rugs scattered about on a floor, are as bad as spots of little pictures on the walls. One small rug before a sofa, or again before a fire, has a reason for its existence and suggests no query. A series of small rugs, on the other hand, when placed about a room, immediately excites a certain unconscious cerebration, in which a fear of falling plays no unimportant part. That is why long stretches of an even colour throughout one floor are often so reassuring, not only to the eye but to the mind. They give you the certainty at least of a sure foundation. The colour, however, must be low in tone, lower at least than that of the walls, otherwise the whole floor rises and is out of scale, making you feel, when you walk over it, as if you were at sea.

One of the greatest of mistakes made in some of our newer houses lies in the neglect of the servants' quarters, both above and below stairs. This is especially true of houses in the middle of a block, where the aim has been to bring the front door as near as possible to a level with the pavement, so avoiding the ordinary city stoop, which once appeared like a pestilence among us, sweeping the whole length of our island. The recent changes made have led to sinking the kitchen department so low that in many instances electricity must be burned all day even about the stove. No house can possess real dignity which is built upon so great an injustice to those who minister



to its great necessities. When once the crime is discovered, the whole superstructure is laid open to question, even the hidden recesses of the householder's mind coming in for a doubt.

When some regard has been paid to the requirements of the kitchen department, including a well-lighted sitting-room, and when the city stoop is to be avoided, a fashion has been adopted, in some houses, of having a second flight of steps inside the vestibule. In such cases two or three steps lead first from the pavement to the outer vestibule door, half a dozen or more leading from this door to that of the main hall. This serves to bring the windows of the drawing-room on the same level as that of our older town-houses, without the necessity for either defrauding our servants, or defacing our façades with high-perched stoops. In cities like Philadelphia, where a small alley divides the block, none of our problems exists, and the street entrance may be levelled without driving the cook into an inferno.

Much interest may be lent to these modern vestibules, which are sometimes panelled in marble, and sometimes constructed of wood. Objections, however, are often urged against the plate-glass doors, protected by wrought iron and hung with velvets or rich stuffs. But as these have been substituted for the sake of light, such objections hardly hold good, especially as the heavy doors of wood are not eliminated, being always closed at night. When the size of the



vestibule permits, a seat is introduced, sometimes of marble, richly carved in figures. One particular vestibule, and the most beautiful I know, has a rounded ceiling inlaid with mosaic supported by marble panels. The sconces, placed at the spring of the arch, are of bronze, showing charming cherubs holding the light. The steps are of white marble. An exquisitely wrought iron door, hung with richly embroidered velvets opens directly into the hall.

Too many rights of children have been urged in these days, too many laws of health, to presuppose so great a neglect of their apartments, as that which has just been referred to regarding the accommodations made for servants. With just pride the modern well-equipped mother will usher you into her hygienic nursery, flooded with sunshine, and filled with every kind of washable thing, including floor and wall coverings, dolls and their garments, making it an everyday wonder that disease should ever be found lurking in an unsuspected corner. For even the corner is being eliminated as rapidly as possible, the cove being substituted for it, not so much as a crack for holding possible dust being left at the base-board.

The play-rooms, too, are an education in themselves, and as delightful as the thought of the taste of the day can make them. Some are furnished after periods, reproducing famous interiors, some are simply airy and delightful retreats, but all are lovely, representing



in the better houses, no overflow from other apartments, nothing that is shabby, and certainly nothing that is there simply to be broken or abused. One finds book-cases, easy-chairs, pianos, birds, pictures, charming combinations of colour, agreeable outlooks. There is everything, in fact to suggest that even in playtime, and with an abundance of toys about, young ladies and gentlemen, not ruffians, are being so reared that transition to the grown-up drawing-room will never come as an awkward surprise. And why should this not be so? The great distinction dividing one class from another is often found in the seeds that are sown in a nursery or play-room. For here endless readjustments of rights are ceaselessly going on, battles of unselfishness are being fought out, and principles of justice and consideration established, while manners are so cultivated as to become, as they should be, almost automatic, if this may mean being bred into the very bone and marrow of the man. The young son, at any rate, grown to manhood, does not become self-conscious when obliged to take off his hat, nor does he have to stop and think when rising in the presence of an elder. Nor does the young daughter have to go through a series of self-conscious contortions when finding herself obliged to proffer a cup of tea to a friend. In the nursery and playroom, in fact, the child finds provision made for the next stage of its development, which after all should be the main purpose of the home.



And it is on the purpose of the home that stress has been most frequently laid in these pages, a purpose meant to include not alone the whole range of a man's obligations to his own, but to all of those to whom he opens his doors, whether they enter as friends, acquaintances, messengers, or the servants who minister to his daily needs. The fundamentals must be first established; and these include courtesy, consideration, tact, kindliness, knowledge, good taste, respect for one's self and respect for one's neighbour. The observance of these fundamentals alone gives dignity to his dwelling. They must order his life, the arrangement of his furniture, the choice of his curtains, the placing of his books, the lighting of his fires, and the position of his lamps. They must control, too, the very manner of his building. It matters little whether he follows one school or another; but it matters much not only what he undertakes to do, but the way in which he accomplishes his undertaking.

THE END











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